

CHRISTIAN AGAPE: THE BASIS FOR AN
ETHICAL NORM AND A RESPONSE
TO GLOBAL HUNGER

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Dennis Yoshiaki Ginoza
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This professional project, completed by

DENNIS YOSHIKI GINOZA

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

San A. Rhoads
Ronald E. Osborn

March 22, 1976
Date

Wm. C. Haugb. Jr.
Dean

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ABSTRACT

In presenting a Christian view of human response, this project establishes agape as its ethical norm. Agape serves as the motivation and the guide for individual and collective action. In justice and responsibility agape receives its full expression.

The problem under consideration is global hunger. In recent years it has reached a crisis level unprecedented in our human past. Since hunger is both extensive and complex, the resolutions suggested are immediate and long-range. And what is called for is individual involvement with a political cutting-edge.

The focus of chapter one is on the definition of agape. It contains a discussion on the qualities of love and the central role of agape. From a theological premise the ethical importance of agape is developed.

The relationship of agape and justice is the subject of chapter two. The thought of Reinhold Niebuhr adds to our understanding of this relationship. While the discussion is centered on Niebuhr's view, reference is made to the work of Daniel Day Williams for further clarity.

Chapter three begins with a Christological presentation which ties together agape and responsibility. But most of the attention is on John Wesley who brings them together in an effective way.

The causal factors of global hunger are reviewed in chapter four providing both a historical sense and a more contemporary perspective. It is made clear that the rich nations are just as responsible for hunger as the poor nations.

In chapter five suggestions are made for changing policies and practices of peoples and nations so hunger can be averted. Individual commitment and involvement are called for. It is recognized that individual and group effort, without changing the structures of injustice, is not enough. Public policies must be affected by the citizenry.

The enormity of hunger is not denied. But what is brought out as important is that we be guided by agape. With more just structures and more responsible individuals, the hope of this study is that we begin to reverse the forces causing the hunger plight. Ultimately, this means making sacrifices, sharing our resources and technology with others, and changing our present life-styles.

INTRODUCTION

Although the life and teachings of Jesus serve as the fundamental basis for Christian living as well as making ethical decisions, with the constant emergence of new and complex issues, we are in constant need of clarification and reinterpretation. History is not without distortions and misrepresentations on this matter when we strive for personal fulfillment and a social order of harmony and peace. There have been many advocates for complete renunciation of the world, self-professed saviours who proclaimed divine sanction, and individuals who could only conclude that life is an absurdity. While the Christian way has served as the liberation of many, it has also been used for the advantage of the few and for the hindrance of the powerless, the poor, and the ignorant. The need to understand the message of Jesus, therefore, is of primary importance. His focus on agape desires much to be said.

The unprecedented world crisis of hunger deserves our immediate attention and our total commitment. There is no simple answer to this problem. Countless factors and forces contribute to its perpetuation and we as a powerful nation and a Christian people are not blameless. We have much to do with the causal factors, but at the same time, we have both the resources and the human potentialities to offer possible resolutions. Through Christian agape which

is epitomized by God's act in Jesus Christ, we are summoned to respond to our world of hungry people.

It is the thesis of this project to establish Christian agape as the ethical norm in our response to the human lives stricken by hunger. Agape in relation to justice and responsibility both moves and guides us toward serving persons in need and in formulating policies and strategies for effective action.

While this project does not propose to be a blueprint for action, it is hoped that it will elevate our understanding of the problem and serve as an incentive to work for a more compassionate and equitable social order. The Christian churches in our country have not been at the forefront of some of the most pressing issues, but they need to be. In Christ agape works for the redemption of persons and societies. And the churches need to view themselves not only as threads in the moral fabric of our country, but in the social and political fabric as well.

The topic of agape is a vast one and the literature on it is numerous. So it is with agape's relation to both justice and responsibility. A study of this kind requires selectivity, because every aspect of a topic cannot be discussed totally. Therefore, in chapter one I try to confine my discussion to the ethical implications of agape with a theological base. The material in chapter two concerning agape and justice examines the position of Reinhold Niebuhr and relies on Daniel Day Williams' view, to some degree.

Chapter three begins with significant aspects of the Incarnation, but explores primarily the thought of John Wesley who ably ties together agape and responsibility.

On the hunger problem there is much that can be said especially from the historical standpoint, but much of the material in chapter four covers the more recent developments. Chapter five provides only an initial stage for human response to hungry people. More creativity and serious exploration are definitely needed.

Now that we have begun to raise our consciousness on the use of "sexism" in language, I find it important to represent both sexes in the most proper and equitable way. But this is not without difficulties. Since a pronoun for God is yet to be created, I use the word "he" without any negative intentions. While my own efforts has been to use an inclusive language, the quotations have not been changed.

The question of hunger has received much debate in many circles, but hopefully the discussion here will stir our interest for a Christian perspective. With this Christian perspective we need also to face the hunger issue squarely and earnestly with immediate impact and, more important, a long-range commitment. Let us hope that this step is taken and taken soon.

Chapter 1

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN AGAPE

The Christian Church today, just as in the past, is constantly faced with the endless task of making the "right" and "best" ethical decision. This is understandable, because we live in a world of diverse needs, differing personal circumstances, and contrasting social and cultural values. For this reason our job becomes a more difficult one. Recognizing our very complex human situation, let us not lose sight of the primary purpose of the Church, which is, in H. Richard Niebuhr's terms, "the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor."¹ This love is essential in the life of the Church, because in addition to giving every person a purpose for existence, it serves as the basis for all our relationships and all our human actions.

It was the prophet Jeremiah of the Old Testament who spoke of the "new covenant" between God and all people. He prophesied:

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.²

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 31.

²Jeremiah 31:33. All scriptural references are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

As Christians we live within this new covenant. This means that the old covenant is broken for we "have God's will in our hearts and we are only to will God's will."³ We presently find ourselves not in the old relationship founded on the outward law, but in a new relationship with a new nature. This newness of life is based on God's love. The bearer of this new law written in the hearts of all people is Jesus Christ and it is through him that God's love is manifested before us. The new commandment demands of us a total response and it asks of us our complete being. It comes in two parts, the first stating: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). In the second part Jesus exhorts: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

Love serves as the uniting force in our broken relationships and it calls us to respond not as individuals only, but as persons in a social setting. Dietrich Bonhoeffer provides us with this stress:

The word is love. There is a recognition of Christ, a powerful faith in Christ, and indeed a conviction and a devotion of love even unto death--all without love. This is the point. Without this "love" everything falls apart and everything is unacceptable, but in this love everything is united and everything is pleasing to God.⁴

Following the same line of discussion, Daniel Day

³Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 213.

⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 172.

Williams conceives of agape as a movement beyond the sacred into the secular. He credits the Reformers, primarily Luther and Calvin, for this emphasis from the historical standpoint. He cites:

The Reformers' great achievement was the insight that the way of agape can be actualized in secular existence with all its issues and decisions. The spirit of agape leads to action to meet the needs of men in the world as it is.⁵

With such insight, we can say that agape speaks, not solely to the personal and group problems and concerns, but it speaks to the dilemma of our institutions, our national governments, and our world systems as well. It gives direction to our lost state and provides hope to our self-inflicted cycles of hopelessness.

THE TWO OBJECTS OF LOVE

Since it is essentially an ethic of love that guides all who are Christians in decision-making, I wish to clarify that when referring to love, we are referring to two objects--God and neighbor. To consider the love for God and for neighbor as one and the same, in my opinion, is wrong. There has been a tendency to do this, but it is necessary to make a clear distinction between these two qualities of love. Kierkegaard makes this point:

A man should love God in unconditional obedience and love him in adoration. It would be ungodliness if any man dared love himself in this way, or dared love

⁵ Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 198.

another person in this way, or dared to let another person love him in this way. . . . For the wisdom of God is not to be compared with yours, and God's governance is not, in duty bound, answerable to your prudence. All you have to do is to obey in love. A human being, on the other hand, you ought only--yet, not, this is indeed the highest--therefore a human being you ought to love as you love yourself.⁶

H. Richard Niebuhr considers love as having two distinct virtues with no common quality, only a common source. Furthermore, in contrasting the two, he sees the love for God as adoration and gratitude while the love for neighbor is pitiful, giving, and forgiving.⁷ In Outka's words we find a sharper distinction:

One is free to worship and obey God; but to worship the neighbor is an act of idolatry. And one may suffer and forgive neighbor, but to presume to "forgive" God would constitute blasphemy.⁸

It is clear thus that Christian love carries different characteristics when directed toward God and when directed toward neighbor. When pertaining to God, it is necessary to place God on an ultimate level far above our own level of existence acknowledging his divine transcendence. We should turn to God in obedience, at the same time, with glorification and praise, in the humble receptive attitude of worship and communion. When referring to persons,

⁶Søren Kierkegaard, Works of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 36.

⁷H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 18.

⁸Gene Outka, Agape, An Ethical Analysis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 46.

what is required of us is the response to human needs without any form of partiality nor the expectancy of requital. Toward others the spirit of agape moves us in the direction of the principles of equality and justice, and toward the benevolent attitude of sharing, even to the extent of self-sacrificing acts. In addition, agape fills our hearts with compassion and forgiveness for all our neighbors.

When I speak of Christian love, I am really speaking of "agape"--love which originates from God. At this juncture, I find the definition offered by Nygren most helpful.⁹ God's love, according to Nygren, is "spontaneous and unmotivated." It is not guided by personal worth, it has no motive external to itself, and it seeks not the righteous. In this sense, agape is "indifferent to value." It is boundless and impartial. In Jesus' own words we have this depiction:

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.¹⁰

Following Nygren's definition, agape is also "creative." Thus it is a unique kind of love, because while not seeking objects of worth or merit, agape seeks that which is unworthy and imparts value on its object. "Agape is value-creating principle," says Nygren.¹¹ Another quality of

⁹Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 75-80.

¹⁰Matthew 5:44-45.

¹¹Nygren, p. 76.

agape is its initiative to create fellowship with God. Taking a revolutionary form, God's love is a process of reaching down to the human realm and creating a relationship between persons and the Creator. If this step were not taken by God, there would be no fellowship, Nygren would hold, because from the human level, there is no way at all that leads to God. With this understanding of agape, we can better comprehend the nature of Jesus as well as the commandment for us to love both God and neighbor. H. Richard Niebuhr does not describe Jesus apart from God.¹² For Niebuhr, Jesus does not mention worth apart from God, nor can we speak of Jesus' love without its relation to God. God to Jesus is the ultimate object of devotion, the only one to be sought and thanked, the only one with the attribute of Fatherhood. In the final outcome, Niebuhr asserts: "It was not love but God that filled his soul."¹³ Attesting this fact, Bonhoeffer relates this another way, "Love is always [Jesus] Himself. Love is always God Himself. Love is always the revelation of God in Jesus Christ."¹⁴

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

When Jesus commanded that we love our neighbor as ourselves, the question that is raised often is, who is my neighbor? We can find Jesus' response to this question in

¹²Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, pp. 16-18.

¹³Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴Bonhoeffer, p. 174.

the parable portrayed in Luke 10:29-37. In reviewing this episode, Paul Ramsey suggests that instead of answering the question which had been posed, Jesus' response turned out to be a definition of "neighborly love."¹⁵ He points out that what Jesus actually does is shift from being concerned with what type of person deserves our care to requiring of the inquirer himself to become the neighbor. The central focus of this parable is placed on neighborly love rather than on how we are to discriminate the worthy person from the unworthy.¹⁶ This clearly accentuates the wisdom of Jesus. We can conjecture that he knew the human dilemma well. While it is our frequent inclination to quick judgment and exclusiveness, Jesus wisely left agape without borders and without the stumbling block of self-interest, this selfish notion meaning our tendency to define and interpret laws and principles to the benefit of particular persons and groups in an exclusive way.

The thrust of this parable took a sharp turn when Jesus asked the question, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (Luke 10:36). It is the contention of Kierkegaard that what resulted in this dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisee is that at the moment we acknowledge our sense of duty, we will be able to determine our neighbor. Moreover,

¹⁵Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 92.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 93.

what is crucial in this case is that Christ wanted to show that being a neighbor is more important than discovering who our neighbor is.¹⁷ According to E. Clinton Gardner, pertinent to our Christian understanding is that God's love constitutes the element of "universality"; thus our love for one another should be the same.¹⁸ Our neighbor then is all people and the command for us to love our neighbor means essentially that we love all persons without partiality, being sensitive to all needs, and placing no value due to performance or uniqueness. As Jesus sought to help and include in his fold those who were lost, those rejected, those afflicted, and those of sinfulness, we ought to do likewise. Even our enemies, though they oppose and threaten to destroy us, deserve our expression of love. This mandate is certainly colored with radicalism, but in agape's true sense, and to serve as true believers and servants of God, we cannot escape completely such a demand.

SELF-LOVE

By looking at the second part of Jesus' reiteration of the greatest of commandments, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," the exhortation includes the loving of oneself as well. Self-love which is placed in the total context of the love of God and the love of neighbor can serve

¹⁷Kierkegaard, p. 38.

¹⁸E. Clinton Gardner, Biblical Faith and Social Ethics (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 176.

as a basis for ethical decisions, but only in that context.

Nygren remarks:

Self-love is man's natural condition, and also the reason for the perversity of his will. Everyone knows how by nature he loves himself. So says the commandment of love, thou shalt love thy neighbour. When love receives this new direction, when it is turned away from one's self and directed to one's neighbour, then the natural perversion of the will is overcome.¹⁹

At this point, Nygren is correct in recognizing our tendency to pervert the love for self. We will notice that Jesus proclaimed the love of God and the love of neighbor as a unity and of equal importance, that is to say, the neglect of one or the other would have distorted its true significance. When self-love is removed from agape, it is likely to dwell in darkness, in sinfulness, in disfigurement.

This question of self-love serving as a guide for human behavior has led to much debate. Ramsey warns against assuming that loving our neighbor as ourselves is enough to guide us in making proper judgments in life.²⁰ He goes on to say that if we fail to care for ourselves and if we hate and despise ourselves, and indeed there are many who do, then self-love does not serve as the best standard for neighborly love. Kierkegaard also perceives the proclivities in persons to pervert the love of self which causes him to say that "every man has in himself the most dangerous traitor

¹⁹Nygren, p. 101.

²⁰Paul Ramsey, "The Biblical Norm of Righteousness," Interpretation, XXIV (October 1970), p. 422.

of all."²¹ What is more accurate for him, then, is this reformulation, "You shall love yourself in the right way."²² We should note here that self-love is not completely disregarded by Kierkegaard, but given a direction. We will elaborate further in the course of this paper that it is agape which guides self-love and it is agape which undergirds God's actions in the world and our response to God.

To enhance our comprehension of self-love, I find it quite helpful to turn to the analysis presented by Outka. He lays out four ways of viewing self-love: (1) as wholly nefarious; (2) as normal, reasonable, and prudent; (3) as justified derivatively; and (4) as definite obligation.²³ Outka uses the word "acquisitiveness" to describe the first category of self-love. By acquisitiveness, he means that the predominant goal in operation is the attainment of individual and private satisfaction. Everything that is done by the person is for his or her own sake and when in a relationship with others, what is done is to secure personal ends. Even in social circumstances where cooperation is evident, the ultimate interest is for the fulfillment of the self. He included in this classification the more obvious of sensuality as well as the "devious" types--"romantic and religious relations." From a broader historical perspective, Outka describes two kinds of orientation:

²¹Kierkegaard, p. 39.

²²Ibid.

²³Outka, pp. 56-73.

(1) Acquisitive self-love is a discriminable set of attitudes and actions which has reappeared with depressing persistence throughout human history, albeit in extremely varied exemplifications; (2) acquisitive self-love is the sole spring of human behavior, the only set of attitudes and actions there is, identical for every man (and woman).²⁴

To clarify this he says that (1) implies acquisitiveness guiding "all the actions of some [persons]" while (2) implicates acquisitiveness guiding "all the actions of all [persons]" throughout human past.²⁵

The second view is that self-love is normal, reasonable, and prudent. To amplify this position, Outka portrays it as not necessarily being "blameworthy," personal welfare is not the ruling concern, "ease and distrust" are not the predominant elements, and the interest of self does not carry over completely into acquisitiveness. Self-love in this particular case can be an instrumental aid to persons applying certain standards of treatment toward individuals. It can serve as the "paradigm" for our actions, because it has the quality of "equal regard" without seeking a return for oneself. Outka also sees this form of self-love as the basis for the application of the golden rule. The basic assumption here is that most persons prefer sympathetic treatment and are willing to provide equal regard for others. Self-love, in still another sense, is not negatively conceived when it relates to a person's "blessing or fruition" from performing a deed of "other-regard." To

²⁴Ibid., p. 58.

²⁵Ibid.

keep self-love blameless, it should be clear that the motive for an act is not the acquisition of a reward, rather it should be for the interest of others, the blessing and fruition to the self occurring only as an "accident."

The third view offered by Outka is self-love as justified derivatively. In this case, concern for one's welfare is both fitting and legitimate if it has as its base, the welfare of the other person. It is not so much an obligation to maintain self-concern as it is a person's privilege to seek individual well-being. We serve our own good, for example, when doing so will also affect positively the state of another. In the situation of a murder attempt by a third party, Outka explains that justification for the preservation of one's interest against the other individual is acceptable. Outka's observation in such a predicament is this: "Her obligation and self-interest may simply coincide."²⁶ Another illustration that justifies self-love is when personal behavior, unless revised or corrected, has negative effects on others. When a person becomes a burden by certain actions, he should place his welfare first, because of its direct influence on his neighbor.

This brings us to the last of Outka's categories: self-love as a definite obligation. The point made by Outka at this level is that obligation provides a balance to the interplay between the regard for self and the regard for

²⁶Ibid., p. 69.

other. This view recognizes the danger of extremities in either case. Outka replies:

The point for our purposes now is that self-regard and other-regard, when carried to excess, give rise to roughly equivalent dangers. Self-sacrifice can become too prodigal almost as readily as self-regard can become too acquisitive; the relative strength and weakness of each are sufficiently alike to require independent attention and proportional exhortation.²⁷

The term that best describes the relationship between the love of self and the love for other is "coincidence." In other words, these two types of love need to exist side by side not merely by chance, but because of necessity. Each requires the presence of the other. Self-love does not act as a substitute for neighbor-love; it always exists in correlation with the other. Self-love requires the consideration of both its possibility toward acquisitiveness as well as its favorable quality of "self-respect." Hence, consideration of self-love is a matter of obligation; it deserves to be protected.

Although the position I wish to present in this study on self-love is closest to Outka's fourth category, there will be a significant difference in emphasis. Self-love and agape do exist side by side not so much as obligation, like a system of checks and balances, but in a relationship where agape transforms self-love and redirects it. Human love therefore which has the propensity toward establishing self as the only center, can move upward and

²⁷Ibid., p. 70.

participate in a life that is theocentric. Through agape there is a possibility for change in the human constitution. Paul states: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (II Corinthians 5:14). The spirit of agape which comes to us from God gives self-love its proper character. This will be more evident in the next section.

THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF AGAPE

The discussion concerning the relation between self-love and agape received great attention from the writing of Nygren. In his Agape and Eros he upholds the position that both forms of love are incompatible and cannot coexist. He inserts: "Eros is essentially and in principle self-love."²⁸ With this definition he logically concludes that agape excludes all self-love, that self-love has no legitimate place in Christianity, and the basic problem of "alienation" between God and his children is due to a twisted love for self."²⁹ While we can appreciate Nygren's attempt to clarify eros from agape, he goes too far by opposing them completely. It is unfortunate that he defines eros simply as a perverse form of love.

"The ontology of love leads to the basic assertion that love is one," affirms Paul Tillich.³⁰ When saying

²⁸Ibid., p. 216. ²⁹Nygren, pp. 216-8.

³⁰Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 27.

that love is one, this implies that it is one with many qualities. He is able to bring out both the positive and negative aspects of these qualities. Epithymia, the lowest quality as the urge for sensual self-fulfillment, can be found in eros, but eros moves beyond epithymia. Eros plays a vital role for Tillich, in contrast to Nygren, because its drive for truth makes possible theology, its drive for beauty gives meaning to ritual forms, and in respect to God, eros makes the love for God a viable concept.³¹ Tillich observes that Freud misrepresented libido with the perverse definition--the desire for pleasure. Essentially he sees love as "the drive towards the reunion of the separated,"³² and consequently, it is proper to say that "unperverted life" also strives toward this end. Epithymia, libido, eros, philia, we can conclude, all share this same drive.

The qualities of love we have described move from the human side, but agape is divine love which reaches out to all the other qualities of love. Agape has within itself a transforming power, the power to take love which turns from the Creator, the love which seeks to possess persons and objects for its own interest, the love that has destructive consequences, and give them new appearance and content. Tillich shows that agape has the power to cut into libido, eros, and philia, and elevate them beyond self-centeredness. Agape transforms libido from its pleasure

³¹Ibid., p. 31.

³²Ibid., pp. 28-29.

principle to the regard for the other in his or her personal center, agape makes irresponsible cultural eros responsible and mystical eros more personal, and agape widens the limited scope of philia, not making everyone friends, but treating all as persons.³³

In the writing of Bernard of Clairvaux we can note both the coexistence of self-love and agape, and the process in which self-love reaches a higher form. Here agape undergirds the developing relationship between the lover and the loved. Saint Bernard identifies four stages of love. Pointing out that our birth takes place within flesh itself, he names the first stage to be, the loving of oneself for one's own sake. However, there comes a spiritual awareness in the flesh and the second stage of love is attained, loving God for one's own sake. Saint Bernard considers the possibility of reaching still a higher stage in this earthly life, after the spiritual exercises of worshipping, meditating, praying, studying, experiencing, where the "sweetness" of God is tasted, and this third stage is: the love of God for his very Self. The fourth stage, the highest of all, a point of which he knows of no one accomplishing it in human life, is the love for oneself for the sake of God.³⁴ Here all life is transformed into a spiritual life, a stage

³³Ibid., pp. 117-9.

³⁴Bernard de Clairvaux, Saint Bernard on the Love of God (Trappist, KY: Abbey of Gethsemani, 1943), pp. 32-39, 53-55.

where the fellowship is with God where evil, pain, and suffering found no entrance. Truly, Saint Bernard considers this the state of perfect living. Tillich's notion of love as the drive towards the reunion of the separated seems to be shared by Bernard, an end made possible by agape.

Christian agape entered the realm of human existence through Jesus Christ. This act of love endured many hardships, it overcame the seeming hopelessness that appeared without end, and it gave meaning to the most difficult of physical deaths. The Cross of Christ truly exemplified the degree to which God loves all the children of the world. The life and death of Jesus Christ expressed agape's sacrificial nature. The Word became flesh that sinners might turn back to God. This divine-human act in our world, according to Paul, brought life to a world made dead by its trespasses, so it is in Christ that we are made alive (Ephesians 2:4-5). The words attributed to Jesus by Matthew relate self-sacrifice in its paradoxical nature: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39). Williams provides this view:

God discloses himself as agape. We do not discover his love welling up within us. We discover it at the boundary of our existence, in the experience of crisis, and in the overwhelming goodness for which we give thanks, or at the abyss of despair toward which we plunge. Agape is the affirmation of life, the forgiveness of sin, the spirit in which the self can give itself away and yet be fulfilled.³⁵

³⁵Williams, p. 210.

It is in self-giving that we can fully be our true selves. Agape frees us from self-centeredness in order that we become outer directed, agents of service. Gardner states:

Agape sees the other person as God sees him and affirms each self as a person in the same way that God accepts each and affirms each as a person. Agape seeks to unite those who are separated into a holy community of persons who know themselves to be loved by God and who are therefore free to love their fellowmen without anxiety for themselves.³⁶

The way of agape is not easy and its promise is not one that assures self-fulfillment without cost. It involves great risks. Agape is active in the midst of the world where people hurt, struggle, and despair. The life of agape does not call for the denial of the world though many believed this was what Christ meant. Instead it seeks its transformation. It reshapes the world with a new purpose. Williams helps us with an added perspective when he brings out that human love participates in both the goodness of the created world and its twisted, dark corners of existence. He wants to avoid a naive, unrealistic view that everything is well and good. For him even self-sacrifice has its perverse character of being vengeful and deceptive. In our world he cites even elements of the demonic:

The need to belong, to be secure in relationship to the other, to find the self fulfilled and loved is so great that when it is blocked the power of love bursts into the demonic passion of fanaticism, self-worship, arrogance, and superiority toward those who threaten our little securities.³⁷

³⁶Gardner, p. 183.

³⁷Williams, p. 211.

Love which is powerful as a force seeks to unify its crumpled parts, reaches down to even the darkest spots of our world, that is, when guided by agape. In this broken human situation only love which is self-giving can be effective.

Agape is our sound source for motivation and a reliable guide for human response, because it engages in the betterment of human existence. It never asks for a lesser quality in life. In this life we find ourselves in a process of growth. There is the search for greater meaning beyond passing things, there is the battle to overcome the constraints of matter, and there is the striving for ultimate personal and social fulfillment, and in human love, we can go just so far. Agape lifts us beyond its limitations. Therefore it serves as the way and the promise. Gardner adds:

God's agape is recognized to be the norm for human conduct because it is seen to be the way in which God loves all men. Such love becomes a possibility for the Christian because he knows himself to be sustained by the divine agape which frees him from his self-centeredness and anxiety about himself. In this way, and for the first time, he is made free to love his fellowmen as God loves them--i.e., without thought of reward or benefit to the self. One who knows himself to be the recipient of this love recognizes that this gift also places a demand upon him to become an agent of this love.³⁸

When agape frees us from the anxieties of self and the ambiguities of life, we can release and begin to actualize our human potentialities. Significant steps in growth take place when our clinging to old thoughts and forms is

³⁸Gardner, p. 182.

replaced by the freshness of strength, creativity, and vitality. And it is in the full giving of self that ultimate fulfillment becomes a possibility. Therefore, through agape we are able to attain the most gratifying relationship--the harmonious interaction with ourselves, our fellow human beings, and our God.

Chapter 2

AGAPE AND JUSTICE

As we turn our attention now to the relationship between agape and justice, we will come to the realization that this subject is both problematic and complex. This is so because our human situation as we know it is filled with ambiguities, contradictions, and diversities. In the ethical realm we are concerned with the formulation of concepts and principles as well as their application through viable methodologies, structures, and processes. We are concerned with both the abstract and the concrete. Furthermore, we are concerned with our total being--our will as well as our actions, our historical reality as well as our ideals, our physical life as well as our spiritual life. The vastness of the issue certainly does not simplify our study of agape and justice.

In the first chapter we explored the meaning of Christian agape. At the first glance, the commandment of love appears very simple and easy. All each person has to do is love both his or her neighbor and God. By so doing, we will be able to reach a state of harmony and communion. From this standpoint a utopian community seems possible and reachable. However, as we consider Paul Tillich's definition of love which is "the drive towards the unity of the

separated,"¹ we are led to the fundamental mental understanding that our world is in a state of imperfection, imbalance, and disunity. Human history points out the fact that a perfect community is only a long desired dream and the future holds no better promise for its realization. Tillich's ontological approach to love sheds more light on this matter.² Love as he defines it presupposes a separation and it follows that "love cannot be described as the union of the strange but as the reunion of the estranged."³ At the same time, the fact of separation and estrangement means that there was "original unity" and "original oneness." The revelation of God in Jesus Christ acknowledges our state of brokenness and provides us with the hope of completeness. While the life of Christ through its struggles and sufferings profoundly emphasizes the need for love, our intimate knowledge of the fragmentation and imperfection in our existence makes us aware of how far we are from applying agape to every aspect of our life.

THE THOUGHT OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR

At this juncture, I find it appropriate to turn to the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr whose contribution to our understanding of the relationship between agape and justice will stand out as monumental. His concern over the

¹Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 25.

²Ibid., pp. 25-26.

³Ibid., p. 25.

application of love in the historical situation where there is a prevalence of injustice on all levels of society will provide a valuable foundation for our discussion here. By reviewing Niebuhr's formulation of a Christian ethic, those of us with an interest in relating our Christian beliefs to the practical issues of societal living will be helped greatly.

The Ideal of Love as
the Impossible Possibility

A crucial issue that arises in Niebuhr's thought is how one is able to take love as we know it in the life of Jesus and make it work in the historical order. The ethic of agape, which carries with it the implicit character of perfection, is what Niebuhr calls "the impossible possibility." This particular concept is developed in his book, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics. The ideal of love in the ethic of Jesus, as far as Niebuhr is concerned, cannot be fulfilled on the present level of human existence, that is, in our world of human institutions and systems. Speaking of love, he states:

It is drawn from and relevant to, every moral experience. It is immanent in life as God is immanent in the world. It transcends the possibilities of human life in its final pinnacle as God transcends the world.⁴

According to Niebuhr, the ethic of Jesus fails to speak to the relativities of our human concerns such as politics,

⁴Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), p. 37.

economics, or the balances of power which are so pertinent in the social scene. It does not provide any base for the horizontal points of a political or social ethic; instead, it only has a "vertical dimension between the loving will of God and the will of man."⁵

Niebuhr describes the unity of God as "potent and creative"; in this way, therefore, God is love. With the statement: "The conscious impulse of unity between life and life is the most adequate symbol of his nature," he holds that the command to love has a relationship with all possible ethical systems, because in a moral demand, there is always the demand of unity.⁶ However, Niebuhr points out that the ethic of love is distinct from every naturalistic and prudential ethic. A naturalistic ethic is limited, because its harmony is always within chaos, its love bound by human egoism. A prudential ethic is either built on the illusion that within nature there is a basic harmony meaning egoism balances egoism in a reciprocal way or it must hold the premise that all conflicts of egoism are so by the essence of human nature. On egoism Niebuhr makes this point:

Egoism is not regarded as harmless because imbedded in a preestablished harmony (Adam Smith), nor as impotent because reason can transmute its anarchies into a higher harmony (utilitarianism), nor as the basic reality of human existence (Thomas Hobbes).⁷

In developing his view of the ethic of agape, Niebuhr wants to invalidate the position of conventional

⁵Ibid., p. 39.

⁶Ibid., p. 38.

⁷Ibid., p. 39.

orthodoxy by attesting the relevance of love to the human situation and he also wants to show the error of certain types of naturalism, liberalism, and radicalism which have espoused utopian illusions, and he does so by stressing love as an impossible possibility. Niebuhr views the revelation of God in Christ as "a revelation of the paradoxical relation of the eternal to history."⁸ While Niebuhr sees the moral qualities of Christ as our hope, he also sees them as our despair. But out of that despair emerges a new kind of hope in revelation. In God's revelation what is made known to us is not only our possibilities, but our limits as well. This Christian hope has its "ultimate confidence in the love of God and not the love of men,"⁹ he stresses.

Niebuhr places perfect love on the same level as God, the "realm of transcendence." In our attempt to relate pure agape to the actions and intentions of persons in this world, we must acknowledge its paradoxical nature. The fact that love is commanded makes it paradoxical, says Niebuhr, because love cannot be commanded nor demanded. He emphasizes:

To love God with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds means that every cleavage in human existence is overcome. But the fact that such an attitude is commanded proves that the cleavage is not overcome; the command comes from one side of reality to the other, from essence to existence.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 120.

⁹Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 209-10.

Love makes a demand on our will; while our will which he defines as "the total organized personality moving against the recalcitrant elements" suggests a cleavage in the self, Niebuhr makes it clear that this cleavage does not appear between reason and impulse.¹¹ Our ability to love is a "natural endowment" and love in the ideal sense includes our impulses and our emotions. As Niebuhr relates love to our community of persons, he further comments that an individual is not only under its critical review, but under obligation "to emulate the love of God, to forgive as God forgives, to love his enemies as God loves them."¹²

It is Niebuhr's contention that our God is of the "mythical-prophetic conception"; therefore, God is conceived as the "ground of existence" and the "essence which transcends existence."¹³ This, too, infers a paradoxical nature. But it is this paradox that provides the way for individuals to apply and possess values in the concrete human situation and, at the same time, move beyond the world of temporality and finitude. Along the Johannine formulation, Niebuhr sees the commandment to love originating not from a human plane, but from a divine plane; we ought to love because God loves us. Niebuhr states it this way:

The obligation is derived, in other words, not from the obvious unities and affinities of historic existence, but from the transcendent unity of essential reality.¹⁴

¹¹Ibid., p. 210.

¹²Ibid., p. 211.

¹³Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁴Ibid.

The Concept of Sin
and the Fall

For a fuller comprehension of Niebuhr's development of the ethic of agape in our world situation of conflicts, suffering, and incompleteness, his concept of sin needs to be explored. According to Niebuhr, agape and sin must be seen together. The love commandment acts as an aid for us "to create the consciousness of sin."¹⁵ This consciousness of sin is the result of "religious imagination" and through it we become aware of our separation and finitude. Niebuhr adds this illumination to our sense of sin:

It is the consequence of measuring life in its total dimension and discovering the self both related to and separated from life in its essence.¹⁶

Niebuhr sees sin as an act against God in rebelliousness. The act of sin is committed when we lift our temporary creations to the ultimate level--permanence and absoluteness. Rather than placing God in the center, the temporary and eternal are mixed and we claim for ourselves our governments, our cultures, and our classes as the centers of existence.¹⁷ In effect, we not only want to be godlike, we want to make ourselves God.

Niebuhr makes a definite move from the position of traditional orthodoxy when it comes to "original sin." He refutes the idea that sin is in this world through "inherited corruption." He calls the orthodox doctrine

¹⁵Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 85.

"self-destructive," and as far as he is concerned, inheritance destroys the freedom of will which in turn removes responsibility from human action.¹⁸ Unlike orthodox Christianity which historicizes the Fall, he sees sin as pervasive in "every moment of existence, but it has no history."¹⁹

From the mythical account of the Fall in Genesis, human responsibility cannot be denied. This account is praiseworthy, for Niebuhr, because it preserves the paradoxical relation of spirit and nature in human evil and monism and dualism are avoided.²⁰ While the origin of evil goes back to the rebellion of the first man, the presence of the serpent removes the idea that the first cause of evil was the act of man. Niebuhr contends that even before the actual occurrence of rebellion, the world was not in perfect harmony. The concept that Satan can rebel and still be under God's dominion is evidence that evil in the world is paradoxical. By this Niebuhr intends to show that evil is more than the absence of order and yet it depends on order. He offers this qualification:

Evil, in other words, is not the absence but the corruption of good; yet it is parasitic on the good.²¹

Earlier it was stated that Niebuhr defined sin as a rebellion against God and in this rebellion we want to make ourselves God. Since this is primarily a "religious

¹⁸Ibid., p. 90. ¹⁹Ibid. ²⁰Ibid., p. 72.

²¹Ibid., p. 73.

dimension" of sin, Niebuhr would add that "the moral and social dimension of sin is injustice."²² Because the concept of sin plays such a major role in Niebuhr's development of a social ethic, I find it fitting to elaborate further on it. According to Niebuhr, our sin against God is basically a "sin of pride" and it is pervasive in human society on every level. Pride takes three different forms--pride of power, pride of knowledge, and pride of virtue. Concerning the pride of power, it manifests itself from two sides, that of security and that of insecurity. Those operating from a secure base affirm their "self-mastery" and "self-sufficiency" and raise themselves to ultimacy. The ego of these individuals is unconscious of the finite. On the personal as well as the collective level, these persons have amassed a high degree of social power. From the side of insecurity, Niebuhr sees the "lust for power." This "will-to-power" has manifested itself as the control over nature, the attainment of physical comfort as life's goal, and dominion over the lives of other persons. The futility of this venture is well said in the following statement:

But furthermore, the more man establishes himself in power and glory, the greater is the fear of tumbling from his eminence, or losing his treasure, or being discovered in his pretension.²³

On intellectual pride of individuals, Niebuhr says

²²Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 179.

²³Ibid., p. 193.

that it is "a more spiritual sublimation of his pride of power."²⁴ As this form of pride occurs through the ignorance of finitude, it also emerges from the attempt to deny or veil any taint of self-interest. In the cases of Descartes, Hegel, Kant, and Comte, Niebuhr accuses them of attributing finality to their temporal thought. The pride of intellect is also manifested in the domination of one culture over another, majority groups over minority groups, one oligarchy over another. The pride of virtue, on the one hand, has the tendency toward self-righteousness. Niebuhr sees relative moral standards made absolute, the arbitrary standards of the self are used to judge and condemn the behavior of others. The pride of virtue, on the other hand, takes the form of "spiritual pride." Niebuhr deals with this form of pride harshly when he says that "the worst form of class domination is religious class domination," "the worst form of intolerance is religious intolerance," and "the worst form of self-assertion is religious self-assertion."²⁵

The trouble in trying to realize the ethic of agape, therefore, is not only with our human proclivities, but it is also with the state of our social condition. The arena of human existence is bound by finitude, the portrait of human nature has been stroked by the elements of sin, and our societal ideals are limited by a temporal order. Hence, the human error has been to make ultimate claims from the

²⁴Ibid., p. 194.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 200-1.

flux of the finite, seek perfect harmony in self-created forms, and deify the human in the midst of God. What Niebuhr has rightly shown is that the application of the Jesus ethic surpasses the possibilities of our moral attainments. This is not to say, nevertheless, that the ethic of agape is without relevance to human existence.

Relating Agape to Justice

The way this relevance is developed by Niebuhr is through a dialectic approach which shows the relationship between the Sermon on the Mount to social ethics. While relying on a non-rational Christian faith in building his theology, he also borrows from a more rational, natural theology.²⁶ The link for Niebuhr is the concept of equality which is related both to love and justice. He views equality as the "regulative principle of justice" and in it lies also the "echo of the law of love."²⁷ Furthermore, because equality is a "rational, political version of the law of love," it too shares the law of transcendence.²⁸ "Imaginative justice" is able to move beyond equality, because it takes into consideration special needs of persons. According to Niebuhr, the law of love serves as "the source of the norms of justice," it is "involved in all approximations of of justice," and it acts as the "ultimate perspective" from

²⁶George Hammar, Christian Realism in Contemporary American Theology (Uppsala: Lundequistsk, 1940), p. 217.

²⁷Niebuhr, Interpretation, p. 108.

²⁸Ibid.

which the limitations of collective behavior can be discerned.²⁹

In relating love to justice, Niebuhr says, "Love is both the fulfillment and the negation of all achievements of justice in history."³⁰ Within the course of history he implies that there is a movement in human action toward the fulfillment of perfect love coupled with the movement away from perfect love. In striving to achieve pure love, the attainments reached are but higher degrees of justice, never pure love itself. At the same time, at each new level of progress, contradictions to perfect love can always be found. Because of the paradoxical nature of the relationship between love and justice, for Niebuhr "the pinnacle of the moral ideal stands both inside and beyond history" and we can understand the ethic of agape best through the "dialectical relation between history and the eternal."³¹

In Niebuhr's social ethic, justice assumes the primary role. It is through justice that we are able to treat the political, social, and economic problems and conflicts. Agape does not address itself to these matters. It can only do this within the bounds of justice. Love without justice cannot adequately speak to the conditions of the world, and so with justice. Justice without love in Niebuhr's terms

²⁹Ibid., p. 140.

³⁰Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, p. 246.

³¹Ibid., p. 247.

becomes less than justice.

In so far as justice admits the claims of the self, it is something less than love. Yet it cannot exist without love and remain justice. For without the "grace" of love, justice always degenerates into something less than justice.³²

Rather than seeing love and justice opposed (Nygren), or identifying the two as one and the same (Fletcher), Niebuhr makes a distinction between them without opposing them altogether.³³ He points out a definite relationship between them in the form of interdependence. One cannot exist without the other and still be relevant to the realm of human history.

In the eyes of Niebuhr, justice becomes a necessary instrument of agape in the sense that it instills in persons the element of obligation for one another. These occur in three different ways. First, the sense of obligation is caused by the awareness of a person's needs which evolve into a "continued obligation" in the crystalized form of "fixed principles of mutual support." Second, from simple relations between self and other, the obligation widens itself into more complex, extensive relations between self and others. Third, the obligation developed by the self through individual discernment, moves out and encompasses the community's own sense of obligation which is then

³²Reinhold Niebuhr, Love and Justice (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), p. 28.

³³Gene Outka, Agape, An Ethical Analysis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 78-84.

expressed in "custom and in law."³⁴ The rules and laws of justice which are formulated in abstract terms are "in a positive relation to the law of love" and they operate on a rational, calculative level.³⁵ While the felt obligation toward others can have the emotions of pity, even ecstasy, Niebuhr explains that as the relationships broaden, increasing the number of persons, there is a greater need for rational calculations to cope with competing needs and interests.

DANIEL DAY WILLIAMS ON AGAPE AND JUSTICE

Daniel Day Williams, in The Spirit and the Forms of Love, also addresses himself to the question of agape and justice. To a degree, we will note that he and Niebuhr share some common ground. However, Williams constructs the relationship between the two concepts from a different base. His observations will certainly add another dimension to this matter.

While Niebuhr considers justice as the instrument of love and love as an ideal, Williams presents justice as the "skeletal structure" of love. "Justice is the order which love requires."³⁶ Unlike Niebuhr, he conceives love as the foundation of justice. In tracing the biblical account of justice and love, he demonstrates a closer affinity between

³⁴Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, p. 248.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 250.

the two than does Niebuhr. Together they speak to the personal as well as the collective, to the religious as well as the political.

It is true that the biblical writers on the whole do not interpret justice in the form of general principles, but as a universal personal concern for every man for the stranger and alien as well as the elect people. Human obligations are grounded in the will of God and in the disclosure of his righteousness in history. Thus the prophets appeal for decent treatment of the stranger, "because you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there" (Deuteronomy 24:18).³⁷

The tendency of Niebuhr seems to be, not so much the removal of love from the historical context, but the creation of some distance to it. Justice as Williams defines it is much more personal and it is filled with the spirit of love.

Williams portrays the spirit of love as working in history, in the concreteness of human problems, and it is an active force moving persons toward a "new community." Love in this sense is not static, it is active. It is not just an ideal, it is an initiating element affecting the lives of individuals. Christian agape, furthermore, operates in a context, in particular situations, and it gives history a direction. Williams offers this comment:

We see however that the context of ethical decision is not the immediate situation alone. It is the history of God's reconciling work looking toward the new community. Action here and now has consequences for Christ's work everywhere. To say that the "situation" determines what must be done is not, in its Christian sense, to give a purely "practical" or relative rule. It means responsibility toward what is at hand, but it also means responsibility within God's atoning work as we, with all our limitations, understand that work.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 245-6.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 247.

The dynamic quality of love as defined by Williams provides what Niebuhr fails to do. Niebuhr's view that love serves as an absolute norm does not adequately relate it to "the concrete issues of moral perplexity."³⁹ Williams' conceptualization of love as spirit and justice as the skeletal structure seems more helpful to the ethical concern here. It needs to be said, moreover, that through Williams' view of love as spirit and Niebuhr's idea of love as the impossible possibility, we are able to gain a better understanding of the relation between agape and justice.

Williams, just as Niebuhr does, calls for the principles of justice so life in its actuality can be better served. This is imperative, because he cannot see love standing alone in the social order without being distorted. He says, "Love without regard for the terms of justice is sentimentality."⁴⁰ Because the establishment of justice is a many-sided task, Williams acknowledges the need for continual involvement in the social and political areas of our world. It is at this juncture that he transcends the contextual ethic and includes the principles of "equity and order" to guide moral decision-making:

Our doctrine of love therefore leads to a qualification of a contextual or situational ethic. While abstract principles in themselves may give no absolute guidance in the concrete situation, responsible and

³⁹Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Reinhold Niebuhr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 24.

⁴⁰Williams, p. 250.

loving action will seek the principles of equity and order which ought to govern human life. Ethics always has a future as well as a present reference. We can never know the full consequences of present action. Therefore we have to respect those principles which point beyond present decision to an order of life which we can specify only in general terms.⁴¹

NIEBUHR ON LAWS AND STRUCTURES OF JUSTICE

Laws and systems of justice are necessary ingredients in society, as far as Niebuhr is concerned, because they foster the spirit of "mutuality and community." On the positive side, they prevent the moral life from capitalizing on the sentimental side of the love commandment. On the negative side, due to the sinful state of the human character, these laws and systems of justice "contain both approximations and contradictions to the spirit of brotherhood."⁴² Because of the finiteness of the world and the nature of the human ego, perfect brotherhood can never be achieved. In Niebuhr's perspective, there is no human situation, structure, or process which stands without any taint of passion or self-interest. In other words, no view of society encompasses the whole of society in pure form, no expression of objectivity is clear of subjectivity.

One of the valuable insights of Niebuhr is his development of his thoughts about the "structures of justice." He helps us get in touch with the realism of our past, the

⁴¹Ibid., p. 252.

⁴²Niebuhr, Nature and Destiny, p. 251.

struggles and the conflicts of individuals, groups, and nations, and he lays before us the reality of the present with the endless striving for order, harmony, and peace. The search for justice in the life and forms of human society is the constant reaching for, minimizing of, and the equalizing of power. The history of nations has oscillated between the ill of tyranny, on the one side, to the ill of anarchy on the other. Niebuhr points out that governments have the tendency to "hide and obscure their contingent and partial character of their rule and to claim unconditioned validity for it."⁴³ In social life power seems to be determined by the nature of "social functions." Niebuhr informs us that different forms of power--military, religious, political, and economic power--have, in one way or another, caused injustice. He states:

All historic forms of justice and injustice are determined to a much larger degree than pure rationalists or idealists realize by the given equilibrium or disproportion within each type of power and by the balance of various types of power in a given community.⁴⁴

Individuals as well, he cites, have the persistent inclination to take power over another individual. In essence, human sin causes us to put ourselves, our interests, and our needs ahead of the next person. This unpleasant reality that Niebuhr sets before us shakes us from any ethic that is naive, sentimental, or utopian. If it does not, it should.

⁴³Ibid., p. 268.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 262.

In the light of our perennial task of struggling against the lure of sin, human society needs both the aspects of a realistic acknowledgment of our predicament as well as a visionary faith in the human potentialities which all persons possess. To preoccupy our time and energy on our inabilities, our limitations, and our failures would lead us only to the state of inactivity and to the point of ethical stagnation. With our understanding of the relation between the law of love and the principle of justice, there is a freshness of hope and a clear awareness of human responsibility. The concerns of all societies must be geared toward the realms of personal interest, social interest, and institutional interest.

EGALITARIAN JUSTICE

According to Gene Outka, Christian agape is best served by the equalitarian premises of justice. This form of justice provides for a consideration of human need as well as human freedom. "To each according to his needs" better expresses the conception that agape has concern for the disadvantaged, handicapped, and the defenseless.⁴⁵ For anyone to assume that everyone should be treated equally and similarly misses the point. Besides, in our present existential circumstances, this is unrealistic nor is it possible to achieve. Thus equalitarian justice does not mean

⁴⁵Outka, p. 91.

identical treatment. Instead, it includes differential treatment in relation to human need and freedom. It fosters the well-being of individuals. Niebuhr makes this observation:

Imaginative justice leads beyond equality to a consideration of the special needs of the life of the other. A sensitive parent will not make capricious distinctions in the care given to different children. But the kind of imagination which governs the most ideal family relationships soon transcends this principle of equality and justifies special care for a handicapped child and, possibly, special advantages for a particularly gifted one.⁴⁶

William Frankena, in his Ethics, also adds illumination to this concept of equalitarian justice. Although he sees a close tie between the principle of benevolence, "the obligation to do good and prevent harm,"⁴⁷ rather than agape, his discussion is valuable. And using a philosophical premise rather than a theological one, he too stresses the importance of needs and abilities in the concept of equalitarian justice. No doubt, this form of justice includes the idea of merit, but it moves beyond it. Both Frankena and Outka recognize the problem involved in the formulation of a viable theoretical position. Frankena offers this insight:

Whether we should treat them in proportion to their needs and abilities depends, as far as justice is concerned, on whether doing so helps or hinders them equally in the achievement of the good life. If helping them in proportion to their needs is necessary for making an

⁴⁶Niebuhr, Interpretation, p. 109.

⁴⁷William K. Frankena, Ethics (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 27.

equal contribution to the goodness of their lives, then and only then is it unjust to do otherwise. If asking of them in proportion to their abilities is necessary for keeping their chances of a good life equal, then and only then is it unjust to do otherwise. In other words, the basic standard of distributive justice is equality. That is why, for instance, justice calls for giving extra attention to handicapped people.⁴⁸

In accommodating both the need and freedom of individuals when speaking of equalitarian justice, Outka does not deny the fact that conflicts will always be present. He makes the following statement:

The process of distinguishing between generic characteristics requires that both equal and unequal distribution be justified on equalitarian premises, and allows that there may be conflict in practice. One must contend that under the characteristics of welfare or need, for example, resources are sometimes to be distributed unequally when needs are unequal in order to equalize benefits. And under the characteristic of freedom, one may disperse praise unequally because one of the wants persons share equally is proportionate recognition of acquired excellences. They are at the liberty to live and develop in a distinctive way which constitutes part of the well-being to be equally weighted and variously assessed.⁴⁹

The ethic of agape and the principle of justice require the involvement of people on all levels of human activity. There is the constant need on the part of persons to let the spirit of agape flow within the structures which are created and there is also the need for formulate and reformulate the rules and laws of justice so greater degrees of love can be achieved from one period to another, from one culture to another, and from one group to another. Niebuhr has clearly shown that the social order is filled with injustices and

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 40-41.

⁴⁹Outka, p. 310.

inequalities because of our sinfulness. To live a life of agape, which is no easy task, nevertheless means that we must take responsibility for the evil in the world. In all our partial systems--legal, social, economic, political, military, educational, religious--we must seek a more equal distribution of power, a fairer distribution of material goods, and a more earnest attempt toward the distribution of opportunities. By relating the spirit of agape to the forms of equalitarian justice, the establishment of more equitable social systems and world order can be made possible.

Chapter 3

AGAPE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The concept of responsibility adds still another important dimension to the significance of agape. Responsibility provides a fuller meaning to the definition of agape. While agape establishes the religious setting, responsibility brings to it a social application. To bring out both the religious and social aspects of this relationship between agape and responsibility, I find it relevant to examine briefly the Christ-event from a Christological perspective. And for a clearer social implication of agape, John Wesley is most helpful. In Wesley we see a move toward a synthesis.

The linkage between agape and responsibility presents the imagery of action and response.

The idea or pattern of responsibility, then, may summarily and abstractly be defined as the idea of an agent's action as response to an action upon him in accordance with his interpretation of the latter action and with his expectation of response of his response; ¹ and all of this is in a continuing community of agents.

From the biblical standpoint we can say that it is God's action and human response which depict the unfolding drama of history. From the beginning of Israel's selection to the formation of the Christian Community, the redemptive work

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 65.

has been based on the initiative of God through love which calls forth a response from his rebellious children.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INCARNATION

The paradigm of agape expressing itself by assuming responsibility is Jesus the Christ.² As Christians and non-Christians, for that matter, we can come to terms with universal responsibility in the Christ-event. Christ appeared in the world for the salvation of all, not just for a particular people or a select community. To grasp the fullness of his message and the total implication of his coming, we cannot limit ourselves to just a small part of his life. We must examine Jesus Christ as God incarnate. In this one life the Heavenly Being became an earthly being, the Word truly became flesh (Jn. 1:14).

Rudolf Bultmann considers the centrality of Jesus' message as doing the will of God and as a response to others, this comes as the commandment of love.³ While we can appreciate Bultmann's observation, we need to take a further step by saying that it was through the Incarnation that the full meaning of God's love was made manifest. With compassion God took the life of flesh, entered the world of sin and suffering, and reached out to the lost and lonely that they might be reconciled to him. Because salvation

²Ibid., p. 162.

³Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 110.

could not come from the side of humanity, God made the ultimate sacrifice--the sacrifice of his only Son. The Incarnation is no other act, but an act of love. To put it another way, the Incarnation receives its meaning in love.

This doctrine that love is the meaning of the divine-human relationship in the incarnation leads to a way of interpreting the incarnation. The union of God and man in Jesus Christ is the communion of God with the man Jesus. It is a communion in which the deity of God and the humanity of Jesus are joined in the freedom of love. God in his grace created a humanity which becomes responsive to him and committed utterly to him. This communion enacted in concrete history discloses the mystery of love in God's being. It is the mystery symbolized in the Trinitarian language of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus of Nazareth as known in the experience of the Church is the human exemplifier of the spirit of God.⁴

The Relevance of the Classical Doctrine

The christological problem lies then on the matter of whether Jesus the Christ was truly divine or human, or both. The controversies of the past dealt with this very issue, because the salvation of all people was at stake. The christological issue hinged on the trinitarian issue. In 325 the Council of Nicea settled the long-lasting Arian controversy. This was an important decision, because if Arius had succeeded, Jesus Christ would be acclaimed by the Church as a demi-god and not truly God. Influenced by Origen's doctrine of the Logos but differing from him, Arius believed that the Logos, the pre-existent Christ, was not

⁴Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 162.

eternal but created. For the salvation of all persons, it was God who had to be incarnate in Jesus Christ, not a lesser god. The question yet to be answered concerned Jesus Christ's true nature. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, under the strong influence of Pope Leo I, the christological conclusion reached was that Jesus Christ maintained both natures. He was true God as well as true man, he was divine as well as human, neither was dominant and both existed in a union without division. This decision meant the rejection of Apollinarius and Nestorius. Apollinarius held that the Logos was the rational element while the body and soul were human. While the divine nature was complete, the human nature was not. Nestorius could not make himself come to accept the doctrine that Mary gave birth to God and he claimed that humanity of Christ suffered, but not his divinity. Concerning Nestorius, Tillich offers this sympathetic note:

If we say that Nestorius became a heretic, we could say that he was the most innocent of all heretics. Actually he was a victim of the struggle between Byzantium and Alexandria.⁵

In summing up the Councils, Tillich says that Nicea kept us from becoming a cult of half-gods and Chalcedon prevented the elimination of the Jesus-character of Christ.⁶

⁵Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 84.

⁶Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 144-5.

A Modern Interpretation

We might ask then, is there a better way we can understand this christological discussion? Are there linguistic symbols in our day that better express the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ? Tillich would say yes. Using existential language and an ontological approach, he presents Jesus Christ as New Being who bridges the gap of estrangement, who reconciles created beings with the Creator, who reunites the two in love. The New Being is the essential character of humanity (the true nature of persons before the Fall) who overcomes the existential character of humanity (the nature of persons after the Fall). In New Being the great chasm between essence and existence is conquered.⁷ So far Tillich is helpful, because his concept of New Being captures the significance of Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that new life is brought to our desolate world. Christ restores the community of love and Christ makes possible eternal salvation. However, Tillich fails to present the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ adequately. While he calls the divine nature "eternal God-man-unity" or "Eternal God-Manhood,"⁸ he does not say that Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man.⁹ Somehow God is obscured in the scene of the Incarnation.

The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ therefore

⁷Ibid., II, 118-9, 125-6. ⁸Ibid., II, 148.

⁹Alexander J. McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), p. 168.

serves as a mystery to us. The union of divinity and humanity becomes paradoxical. Any attempt to fully explicate this unity will reach the limits of human finitude comprehension. Baillie suggests that paradoxical language best portrays this problem.

What I wish to suggest is that this paradox of grace points the way more clearly and makes a better approach than anything else in our experience to the mystery of the Incarnation itself; that this paradox in its fragmentary form in our own Christian lives is a reflection on which our whole Christian life depends, and may therefore be our best clue to the understanding of it.¹⁰

The Incarnation represents the full manifestation of God in a creatureliness of a person, in his full humanness. Where Tillich fails to speak of God adequately in his christology, Baillie succeeds in a paradox. He says the word "God" means this:

It means something so paradoxical that it is difficult to express in a few words. It means the One who at the same time makes absolute demands upon us and offers freely to give us all that He demands. It means the One who requires of us unlimited obedience and then supplies the obedience Himself. It means the One who calls us to work out our own salvation on the ground that "it is He Himself who works both the willing and the working" in our hearts and lives. It is not that He bestows His favour, His grace, upon those who render obedience to His commands. Such divine giving in response to human obedience is a sub-Christian idea, alien to the New Testament; and indeed if God's grace had to wait for man's obedience, it would be kept waiting for ever. But the Christian, when he has rendered his fullest and freest obedience, knows well that somehow it was "all of God," and he says: "It was not I, but the grace of God which was with me."¹¹

¹⁰Donald M. Baillie, God Was in Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 81.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 121.

The event of Christ brought together the divine world and the human world. To do this it was necessary for him to participate in our despair that we might have hope. He lived not a life of sin, but acted on the stage filled with sin to overcome it. He knew the temptation of sin in its entirety. God's love in Jesus Christ meant suffering in the world even to death, the worst kind of death, crucifixion on the cross. This greatest form of humiliation led to the greatest of exaltation in the resurrection. His shame brought glory. Death gave life. Not only did the human Jesus suffer, but God suffered with him; God himself suffered that the whole world might be saved. And humanity shared God's triumph in the resurrection.

We can say hence that in Jesus Christ God's love was completely manifested. As Robinson puts it, Jesus Christ was "the man for ~~us~~." ¹² He goes on to say that in him love had totally taken over, he was in touch with God in the totality of his existence, and he assumed the role as servant of the Lord. To live the life of love implies living the life of a servant. If we misunderstand this point, we also misunderstand the very crux of the Incarnation.

The high drama of the incarnation moves from "the form of God" to "the form of a servant," a process of self-emptying which theologians call by its Greek name, kenosis. The self-identification of Christ with

¹² John A. T. Robinson, Honest to God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 76-77.

humanity surpasses even the generosity of the man Jesus of Nazareth in affirming his oneness with the most degraded and afflicted of men. It is the act of God himself in taking on their human form.¹³

From our brief examination of the Incarnation which establishes both the mission and message of Jesus Christ, we discern that our ethical life must be founded on agape which issues in responsibility. Responsibility in personal and societal affairs ties in directly with what we want to say concerning agape. Love means living for others, it means servanthood, and it means responsibility. For a more complete study of the relation between agape and responsibility, I have chosen to review the Wesleyan position. This choice is more than a matter of my own Methodist tradition; I have made it because Wesley unites agape and responsibility so effectively. Let us now turn to this.

SALVATION: WESLEY'S PRIMARY CONCERN

In the thinking of Wesley, agape and social responsibility are two elements which are very closely related. Agape always points to social responsibility and social responsibility always springs from agape. Neither can stand alone without distortion and one without the other means only incompleteness. To lay the foundation for our understanding of the relation between these two elements, we must see them in the context of Wesley's quest for personal

¹³Ronald E. Osborn, In Christ's Place (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1967), p. 37.

salvation. It is in the salvation of individuals that agape and social responsibility receive their particular importance.

The need for salvation becomes evident as Wesley depicts the fallen state of the world and the total corruption of human nature. The picture he paints of our natural state seems hopeless and without remedy. According to Wesley, the human world has completely turned away from God, lost the image of God with which we had been created, and our lives have been sentenced to a spiritual death. The Fall is described in the darkest terms.

And in Adam all died, all human kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires.¹⁴

The spiritual vacuum in which all of Adam's descendants exist causes Wesley to place as foremost the search for salvation. His total life--his intentions, his teachings, and his actions--was geared toward this end.

Despite the fact that Wesley follows the thought of total corruption and however futile the human predicament might seem, there is hope for salvation in this world. It can be found in his doctrine of prevenient grace. In

¹⁴John Wesley, "Sermon XXXIX: The New Birth," in his Standard Sermons (London: Epworth Press, 1956), II, 230-1.

Wesley's terms, grace is from God, it is given at no cost, it is free, and it comes as a gift. He goes on to say:

It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul" and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things.¹⁵

The source of grace is God and only God. Grace seeks all persons who desire it, moreover, it is made available to everyone without condition. It is never based on the act of the human world, it springs from the goodness of God.

Wesley adds:

First. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part. It does not in anywise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is. It does not depend on his endeavours. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions; for all these flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son and "with him freely giveth us all things."¹⁶

Thus the salvation of individuals in their totally corrupted condition is possible, because of grace. For Wesley, grace precedes faith. "Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation."¹⁷

Salvation for Wesley occurs not in the nebulous,

¹⁵John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1872), V, 7.

¹⁶Ibid., VII, 373-4.

¹⁷Ibid., V, 8.

distant place of the other world, it happens in the reality of this world, in the present, in this life. Salvation is a process and it consists of two parts: justification and sanctification. Wesley sees justification as "pardon."

"It is the forgiveness of all our sins; and what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God."¹⁸ We receive forgiveness through God's action in Jesus the Christ, through his "blood and righteousness." By suffering and dying, our Lord Jesus Christ blots out all our past sins and God will love, bless, and watch over us as if we had never sinned.¹⁹ The sole criterion for justification, as far as Wesley is concerned, is faith and faith alone. He defines faith in the following manner:

Taking the word in a more particular sense, faith is a divine evidence and conviction not only that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," but also that Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me. It is by this faith (whether we term it the essence, or rather a property thereof) that we receive Christ; that we receive Him in all His offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King. It is by this that He is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."²⁰

Faith, like grace, is "a gift, yea, the free gift of God."²¹ Wesley strongly emphasizes that justification takes place not from the "understanding" that justification is by faith;

¹⁸John Wesley, "Sermon L: The Scripture Way of Salvation," in his Standard Sermons, II, 445.

¹⁹Wesley, Works, V, 57.

²⁰Wesley, "Sermon L," II, 449-50.

²¹Wesley, Works, XII, 342.

it is not determined by "works" prior to faith no matter how good they are; and it does not occur without Jesus Christ.²² Justification by faith for Wesley hinges on the grace of God and the human act of believing.

But "faith is imputed to him for righteousness" the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as was observed before) thinketh him to be what he is not. But as "he made Christ to be sin for us," that is, treated him as a sinner, punishing him for our sins; so he counteth us righteous, from the time we believe in him: That is, he doth not punish us for our sins; yea, treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous.²³

The second part of salvation is sanctification. As to sanctification, Wesley implies that it is instantaneous and complete. It begins at the very moment, the very instant one is justified by faith, that is, at the point where one believes. When sanctification has begun, a renewal of the spirit occurs which is imperative for eternal salvation. Spiritual rebirth is an integral part of sanctification, but Wesley does not see them as one and the same. They are two distinct aspects of salvation, yet to speak of sanctification means understanding rebirth. New birth is a part of sanctification, but not the whole of it.²⁴ It is the "threshold of sanctification."²⁵ Spiritual renewal is made possible by the power of God. The Holy Spirit plays an active role by instilling in the human heart the love of God and the love

²²Ibid., V, 61-62.

²³Ibid., V, 62.

²⁴Leo George Cox, John Wesley's Concept of Perfection (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), p. 82.

²⁵Wesley, Works, VII, 205.

of all God's children. The human soul which was once devoid of the image of God as a result of the Fall, regains this lost image, the mighty work of the Spirit of God is once more experienced, and the earthly mind is now transformed into the mind of Christ.

From hence it manifestly appears, what is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it "is created anew in Christ Jesus"; when it is "renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness"; when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, is turned into the "mind which was in Christ Jesus." This is the nature of the new birth: "so is every one that is born of the Spirit."²⁶

Faith which is the condition of justification is also the condition for entire sanctification.²⁷ When sanctification occurs the whole person is affected. Entire sanctification can be attained in the present. So in one sense, sanctification is a complete act. In another sense, sanctification is a gradual change. In Wesley a fine line is drawn and this distinction does appear unclear. But these two aspects need not be in conflict or contradictory as we shall see.

When Wesley says that sanctification is gradual, he means that it is a growing process, a maturing process of

²⁶ Wesley, "Sermon XXXIX," II, 234.

²⁷ Wesley, "Sermon L," II, 452-3. See also Cox, p. 96.

one's spirituality. Thus the end goal in this life is entire sanctification.²⁸ This is when a person's moral life is completely based on agape in the purest sense. New birth makes possible the power over sin, but not the total destruction of sin. Instead, Wesley states that "sin was only suspended."²⁹ When sanctification was initiated, Wesley truly believed that God was operating in the human soul through Christ, that one did become a child of God, and that there was total transformation. Nevertheless, sin from the old creation remained as a "stirring in the heart," and pride or self-will could be felt. But with the Spirit of God working, Wesley emphasizes that sin was not conquering.³⁰ This gradual process of spiritual growth causes one to be "more and more dead to sin," "more and more alive to God," and also there is growth from "grace to grace."³¹ We can say, therefore, that for Wesley sanctification was instantaneous as well as gradual.

That Wesley taught both gradual and instantaneous sanctification is admitted by careful students of Wesley. Many have followed Wesley's teaching on gradual sanctification to the neglect of his doctrine of entire sanctification. Others have emphasized the instantaneous experience but often with a neglect of the gradual aspect. Wesley, as well as Fletcher, clearly taught both gradual and instantaneous sanctification and was able to hold the two aspects in proper balance.³²

For Wesley, to grasp the concept of sanctification, both

²⁸Ibid., II, 448.

²⁹Ibid., II, 446.

³⁰Ibid., II, 447.

³¹Ibid.

³²Cox, p. 88.

qualities were necessary. He insisted that if you speak of gradual change, you must also speak of the instantaneous.³³

THE IMPLICATIONS OF AGAPE IN WESLEY

The description that would fit Wesley is that he was both this-worldly and other-worldly. He had his sights on the world beyond as he understood it from Jesus Christ's teachings, but always in relation to the reality of this world. His ethic was more balanced than that of many who preceded him. He was engaged in the continual quest of harmonizing the inward with the outward, agape acting as the ground from which this is possible. The end that Wesley sought was Christian perfection and his was an ethic of self-realization.³⁴

Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, is the end of Wesleyan moral development, the goal of justification itself, and indeed the final condition for salvation and the entrance into the eternal presence of God.³⁵

In Wesley Christian perfection (which he also referred to as entire sanctification and universal holiness) comes down to one word--agape.

What is then the perfection of which man is capable, while he dwells in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command; "My son, give me thy heart." It is the "loving the Lord his God with all his

³³Wesley, Works, VIII, 329.

³⁴William Ragsdale Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley (New York: Abingdon Press, 1946), p. 225.

³⁵Ibid., p. 240.

heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." This is the sum of Christian perfection: it is all comprised in that one word, love. The first branch of it is the love of God; and as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second; "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself": Thou shalt love every man as they own soul, as Christ love us. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets": these contain the whole of Christian perfection.³⁶

In his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," Wesley points out that in Christian perfection love becomes the source of all actions and motives. He considers Christian perfection the state where there is purity of heart, purity of intention, and purity of thought. He acknowledges the fact that human life exists and functions in a finite state where the human body is still corrupt, therefore, he states: "A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake."³⁷ While these mistakes are not necessarily sinful, they still require the atoning blood of Christ.³⁸ Understanding perfection in the light of our earlier discussion of sanctification, it can be said that Christian perfection is a growing process toward a much higher spiritual and moral development. Life as it is known in our historical setting does not permit the attainment of perfection in the total sense of motive and action, but according to Wesley it is a beginning toward that final end.

In Wesley's description, salvation is possible only

³⁶John Wesley, "Sermon LXXXI: On Perfection," in his Sermons on Several Occasions (New York: Phillips & Hunt), II, 169.

³⁷Wesley, Works, XI, 394.

³⁸Ibid., XI, 395.

through faith, but the appearance of faith has become essential because of the Fall. Faith has no value in itself, hence, its purpose is to re-establish the law of love, to instill in the human heart the love of God which has been lost.³⁹ Faith serves as the source of love, it is a means, and love is the end. Faith is only temporary while love is eternal. Love existed in God even before the foundation of the world and it shall exist after the passing of faith. Faith was designed by God so it could minister to love and only through faith can love be effected in the world under the present circumstances. Before the rebellion that took place in the Garden of Eden, faith was not necessary, because Adam was able to walk face to face with God.⁴⁰ Rather than walking by this sight, those who followed Adam must walk by faith, because through faith, the things of God which are not seen can be once again perceived by the soul. In faith the eyes of the soul are opened and enlightened.

By this two-fold operation of the Holy Spirit, having the eyes of our soul both opened and enlightened, we see the things which the natural "eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard." We have a prospect of the invisible things of God; we see the spiritual world, which is all round about us, and yet no more discerned by our natural faculties than if it had no being. And we see the eternal world; piercing through the veil which hangs between time and eternity. Clouds and darkness then rest upon it no more, but we already see the glory which shall be revealed.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., V, 464.

⁴⁰Ibid., V, 463.

⁴¹Wesley, "Sermon L," II, 449.

Thus it is through faith, the evidence and conviction that God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, that there can once again be the fellowship of love. While on earth the fellowship will be one of increasing love through faith, in the eternal realm fellowship with God will be in love alone.

Wesley's ethic was truly an ethic of love. But to identify it as a love ethic in Wesleyan thought, we must never ignore the fact that it is rooted and built on the premise of personal salvation. Agape is never referred to without this relationship. Lindstrom makes this point:

We saw, however, that in Wesley new birth and entire sanctification must be regarded as states in the process of salvation and not as isolated phenomena, and in the same way his idea of love cannot be dissociated from the idea of the order of salvation.⁴²

Agape, having a divine origin, makes possible the salvation of our corrupt world. Thus love serves as a beginning as well as an end for Wesley. Christian perfection or perfect love is the goal of our moral intentions and actions, and all of our ethical life. From Cannon we have this comment:

Christian perfection, or full sanctification, is "the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodist; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us up." It is the end of which justification is the beginning--the final goal toward which all ethical development moves.⁴³

With Wesley a tension exists between the kingdom of

⁴²Harald Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification (London: Epworth Press, n.d.), pp. 177-8.

⁴³Cannon, p. 243.

persons and the Kingdom of God. And there is a definite chasm between the two. Hence, agape acts as a catalyst and a bridge. Love, just as grace and faith, originates from an eternal source, God. Even the love of neighbor which operates in the activities of men and women springs from what God initiated rather than from human initiative. The love of neighbor can only come from the love of God.⁴⁴ In our natural state, which is the fallen state, there is no way we can love God because we have lost all knowledge of God who created us in his image.⁴⁵ Since our human situation keeps us from loving God naturally, we can only do this with help from above. Acknowledging that God needed to and did act so we could be reinstated in the fellowship of love, Wesley follows the Johannine expression as he declares that we love, because God first loved us.⁴⁶ Before the suffering and death of Jesus Christ can be an internal experience and before the love of God can touch the depth of the heart, Wesley strongly emphasizes the required work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, any knowledge we might have of God's love for us must be preceded by the witness of the Holy

⁴⁴John Wesley, "Charity," Selections from the Writings of Rev. John Wesley (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1918), p. 124.

⁴⁵John Wesley, "Sermon XXXVIII: Original Sin," in his Standard Sermons, II, 217.

⁴⁶John Wesley, "Sermon LXIV: God's Love to Fallen Man," in his Standard Sermons, II, 44.

Spirit.⁴⁷ In this way the Holy Spirit participates in God's act where agape moves from the divine arena to the human arena.

Agape in Wesley's understanding comes in two parts, the love of God and the love of neighbor. It is stressed by Wesley that the law requires of us to love both these objects. In essence, our love for God is for his own and our love for neighbor is for God's sake.⁴⁸ To love God means

to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him.⁴⁹

When we love God in the true sense of the word, it logically follows that we love our neighbor as we do ourselves. These two are understood by Wesley to be closely tied together, the love of God serving as the common source. This love for God always shows its fruits in the love for neighbor and it "seeks every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it."⁵⁰

Everything we do, all that we think, all the things that we desire, when done in love, are done not to praise our creatureliness, but to glorify God who is our Creator. The love that we have for our fellow human beings must there-

⁴⁷ John Wesley, "Sermon XLV: The Witness of the Spirit," in his Standard Sermons, II, 349.

⁴⁸ John Wesley, Works, VII, 495. ⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ John Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal," in his Selections, p. 210.

fore exist to serve God. In defining the commandment to love God with all our heart, Wesley intends the employment of every power and faculty within the bounds of our being.

By consequence, "whatsoever he doeth, it is all to the glory of God." In all his employments of every kind, he not only aims at this, which is implied in having a single eye, but actually attains it; his business and his refreshments, as well as his prayers, all serve to this great end. Whether he "sit in the house, or walk by the way," whether he lie down, or rise up, he is promoting, in all he speaks or does, the one business of his life. Whether he put on his apparel, or labour or eat and drink, or divert himself from too wasting labour, it all tends to advance the glory of God, by peace and goodwill among men.⁵¹

All human activity should be directed toward God, because God is the one perfect Good, the sole End, the Source of our being.⁵² The end of our spiritual pilgrimage is to have communion with God and only in God can ultimate happiness be found. In God we can find eternal fellowship in the spirit of love.

From Wesley's concept of communion with God and his development of his view of Christian perfection, we are easily led to perceive his mystical leanings. Lindstrom makes this very point by citing in his writings the use of mystical ideas. Lindstrom examines these paragraphs from Wesley:⁵³

Let the Spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. "Unto the place from

⁵¹John Wesley, Works, XI, 373.

⁵²Ibid., V, 205-6.

⁵³Lindstrom, pp. 171-2.

whence all the rivers came," thither let them flow again.

To candid, reasonable men I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: Just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,--the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: For this very end he came from heaven.

In these passages Lindstrom points out Wesley's usage of the metaphor of rivers returning to their source and the simile of the flying arrow. What is interesting and valuable about the Wesleyan development of the concept of agape is that it moves beyond the common practice of the mystics. Wesley chooses not the life of a recluse. The works of piety--prayer, the Lord's supper, study of scripture, meditation, fasting--are just half of the requirement for salvation. Salvation is completed with the works of mercy,

. . . such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death.⁵⁴

Agape summons men and women to responsibility in human society. Wesley sought not the ways of the world, but actively participated in the world. If agape is really present in the soul, it cannot stand without outward

⁵⁴ John Wesley, "Sermon L," II, 455-6.

expression. "The tree," Wesley remarks, "is known by its fruits."⁵⁵

In his treatise on "The Character of a Methodist," Wesley calls for obedience to the law in its every sense, from the least points to the greatest. In keeping with the law, Wesley instructs that by obeying the law, only the good of God and the neighbor is deliberated. He sees no contradiction between the gospel and the law. For example, the conception of neighborly love, when spoken as a promise, it comes as gospel.

There is, therefore, the closest connexion that can be conceived, between the law and gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love neighbour, to be meek, humble, or holy: We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith; and "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us" through faith which is in Christ Jesus.⁵⁶

The true spirit of agape can best be described in capsule form through the Pauline formulation and Wesley finds himself in this very camp.⁵⁷ For life to have any meaning at all, it must have love. Without it, we can claim nothing, we work for nothing, we are worth nothing. Human

⁵⁵ John Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," in his Selections, p. 299.

⁵⁶ John Wesley, Works, V, 313-4.

⁵⁷ Ibid., VII, 46-56, 494-9. See also John Wesley, Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament (New York: Eaton & Mains, n.d.), pp. 435-7.

attainments--knowledge, prophecy, good works--without love are hollow, futile, and worthless. The love Wesley defines speaks to what can be found in the human heart; it is an inner attitude, it is a temperament of the soul, it is a quality of the inward spirit. And it is an outward manifestation of selfless acts. Love is kindness that seeks the happiness of others and encased in goodwill for neighbor. The joy it seeks is not for self, therefore, it is not envious. Moreover, with the interest for others, love does not engage in condemnation, judgment, rudeness, or anything that projects evil or destructive thoughts and action. Love is contrary to sinfulness of any kind, it is objective rather than subjective, it strives for truth rather than falsity. Love never seeks its own, never strokes itself with arrogance, it never thrives in resentment or hate. Love is patient, therefore slow to anger, and boast not, thus it is humble and childlike. Moving the earth or even burning one's body brings us nothing without love. For Wesley, love is everything, it covers everything, and it succeeds in everything. The love of God and the love of neighbor encompass the whole of the Wesleyan spirit. "Faith, hope, love, are the sum of perfection on earth; love alone is the sum of perfection in heaven."⁵⁸

Agape for Wesley enabled one to leap beyond the two worlds--the world of believers and the world of non-believers.

⁵⁸John Wesley, Explanatory Notes, p. 437.

Wesley draws a line between the two, but never without concern for both. He is not interested in differences which pertain to opinion, modes of speaking, or customs.⁵⁹ What mattered was one's faith in Jesus Christ as the revelation of God. So we can say that the bond of love between Christians was different in degree from the bond between Christians and non-Christians. But love was always reaching out from the inner circle of believers to the outer. Still speaking of Christians in the fellowship of love, Wesley projects an ecumenical view in his "Catholic Spirit." Neither doctrine, nor practice, nor institutional structure keeps believers divided when religious principles are based on the truth of Jesus Christ and the worship of God. As the Christian circle is warmed by God's love, this catholic spirit stretches far and enfolds "with strong and cordial affection neighbours and strangers, friends, and enemies."⁶⁰

Social responsibility shines forth sharply in Wesley's formulation of agape. His quest for Christian perfection has as its consequence a love ethic requiring action in this world. With the root of religion lying in the heart where the soul of a person unites with God, this very soul cannot help but put forth branches.⁶¹ Thus faith and works constitute a partnership in our spiritual journey toward the

⁵⁹Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," pp. 292-4.

⁶⁰Albert C. Outler (ed.), John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 103.

⁶¹Wesley, Works, V, 304.

union with God. The love of neighbor which flows from faith becomes the ethical mandate for Christians to let the light shine in the world. It shines forth in good works, goodwill toward all people.

Let it shine still more eminently in your actions, in your doing all possible good to all men; and in your suffering for righteousness sake, while you "rejoice and are exceedingly glad, knowing that great is your reward in heaven."⁶²

Let the light which is in your heart shine in all good works, both works of piety and works of mercy.⁶³

Wesley's purpose was to attain spiritual and physical wholeness. From his personal efforts he aspired and worked for a love with purity in spirit and form, and from his social endeavors he toiled with the ills of society to improve the human condition.

Neighborly love in Wesleyan thought carries the element of universal benevolence. It disregards all human barriers and it focuses on all who come under the care of God. It includes those who are easiest to love to those who are "evil and unthankful." This love is "pure, disinterested goodwill" to the entire human family. It is not selfish, possessive, or prejudicial. When Wesley refers to benevolent love, he makes it clear that this is different from the love of esteem or of complacency. The love of benevolence stretches out its hand to enemies unlike the other type. He wants to be sure that neighborly love is understood as the love for all human beings in God's created world.

⁶²Ibid., V, 309.

⁶³Ibid.

WESLEY'S INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Wesley saw Christianity not only as a personal religion, but as a social one as well. Agape which flowed from the reservoir of God's Spirit served as his motivation to condemn the injustices which existed in the social order of his day. Wesley recognized that human society was imperfect, nevertheless, this did not need to be a hindrance to the possibility of perfect love.⁶⁴ Sangster illuminates this particular issue by bringing out that even Christ himself faced the difficulty in living a perfect life. In this imperfect world, Sangster goes on to say that Christ lived a perfect life only in the sense of having a perfect motive.⁶⁵ For this reason Wesley would say that social ills need to be addressed and coped with. While today it is common to say, to better society we must change individuals, we should also say, to perfect the individual, we must also transform the society.

Concerned over the scarcity of provision during his time, Wesley felt compelled to write a letter to the editor of Lloyd's Evening Post.⁶⁶ In it Wesley criticized the economic injustice done to the people. He pointed out that the

⁶⁴Cox, p. 166.

⁶⁵W. E. Sangster, The Path to Perfection (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 176.

⁶⁶John Wesley, "To the Editor of Lloyd's Evening Post," in his Selections, pp. 442-7.

shortage of wheat was caused by the wasteful production of liquor. The luxury of horses, coaches and chaises occupied the land which could produce grain and meat products. The unfair distribution of land had as its consequence large estates which prevented diversified farming. The high taxes were definitely the result of the unnecessary national debt especially influenced by wartime. These unequal practices were the direct causes of unemployment and starvation.

In his work, John Wesley as a Social Reformer, Thompson portrays Wesley as the apostle to the poor.⁶⁷ In this account he brings out how Wesley began caring for the poor while at Oxford and expanded this interest to meet broader needs. His sense of responsibility became incorporated into the societies and he was able to respond to the needs of the poor in a more systematic way. Wesley founded the Poorhouse, a home for widows, he started a school for children whose parents could not afford their education, and he initiated the establishment of a loan fund from which the poor could have a beginning. His deep interest in the sick led him to prepare himself in the area of medicine. His Primitive Physic was the result of his concern for the poor who could not afford medical care. In it he offers particular treatments for illnesses though they appear crude according to modern day medical standards. In his sermon, "On Visiting the Sick," Wesley carefully lays out what caring

⁶⁷D. D. Thompson, John Wesley as a Social Reformer (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898), pp. 1-23.

for the sick requires, how it is to be done, and who should do it. He instructs that this be done in person and by all who can engage in this activity--young and old, rich and poor, men and women--according to their ability.⁶⁸

While Wesley addressed himself to many of the problems that existed in his own national state, he also had an international concern over slavery. He condemned the very system itself. He could see no reason for this inhuman, cruel practice which treated the children of God as mere dung upon the earth, none whatsoever. Slavery was contrary to the fundamental right of a human being.

Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.⁶⁹

Wesley clearly made it known that the African land from which the slaves came has been completely disrupted by unwelcome, brutal, ungodly visitors--intruders would be a better word. This practice was exploitation, going against the will of the people. Wesley's strong opposition was long lasting. He was exposed to the inhuman conditions in 1736 while in Georgia and South Carolina. Through his correspondence he was informed of slavery in America throughout his career. In 1755 he wrote in his Journal that he was much affected by a letter from Virginia pertaining to this matter.⁷⁰ In 1772 Wesley was stirred by the book called

⁶⁸Wesley, Works, VII, 123.

⁶⁹Ibid., XI, 79.

⁷⁰John Wesley, The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley (London: Epworth Press, 1938), IV, 125.

Slave Trade written by a Quaker.⁷¹ Thompson considers Wesley's 1772 pamphlet, "Thoughts on Slavery," as having one of the greatest impacts of any book ever written.⁷² Even up to four days before his death Wesley expressed his firm rejection of slavery in a letter to William Wilberforce, one who also opposed slavery and sought its abolition. Wesley called American slavery an "execrable villainy" and "the vilest that ever saw the sun."⁷³

In his sermon, "National Sins and Miseries," Wesley gives attention to the terrible sin of his own nation where people at home as well as those in the American colonies were suffering, because of the tyrannical government. Liberty was lost, blood was shed like water on the battlefield, and the constitutional principles of government had been disposed of. This then was the same as slavery in the eyes of Wesley.

Wesley's ethical concern was extensive and varied. He spoke against many ills which could hinder a person's attainment of goodness, mercy, and love. Wesley devoted much of his energies warning against material riches.⁷⁴ He was aware that the love of money was a desire that was

⁷¹John Wesley, The Heart of John Wesley's Journal (New York: Eaton & Mains, n.d.), p. 370.

⁷²Thompson, p. 47.

⁷³Wesley, Works, VIII, 153.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, VII, 1-15, 214-22. See also Thompson, pp. 71-91.

unquenchable. The more one possessed, the more one wanted. Money easily turns into idolatry and we cannot serve two masters. Evil was not inherent in money, but in the love for it. It was a stumbling block to the qualities necessary for salvation such as humility, meekness, and patience. In a similar way, Wesley spoke against outward accouterments--gold, pearls, and costly array.⁷⁵ He brought out the tendency for the things of beauty to evoke in persons appetites and temperaments which go contrary to the spirit of love. Self becomes the center rather than God and neighbor. Wesley was truly concerned with the social life of persons. Against the obtaining of material goods through smuggling, Wesley brought out its bad consequence especially in a collective way.⁷⁶ By failing to pay duties, smugglers cause the taxes to be raised which affect the well-to-do along with the lesser privileged. In effect, this criminal act is equated to stealing from one's neighbor. It is a definite breach of God's commandment.

Although Wesley's primary interest throughout his career was spiritual salvation, keeping in perspective the love of God and the love of neighbor, he always had a deep awareness of social responsibility. He was concerned as much with the bodies of persons as he was with their souls. He sought the redemption of the social order. Sangster brings this out effectively.

⁷⁵Ibid., VII, 15-26.

⁷⁶Ibid., XI, 174-8.

Some historians have said that the leaders of the evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century had no interest in the bodies of men--but it is not hard to rebut this criticism. They had the deepest interest in men's bodies. They fostered a hundred philanthropies--orphanages, hospitals, dispensaries, homes for the aged poor, loan societies and many kindred works of mercy. They fought slavery, smuggling, intemperance, the evil conditions in our prisons, and every form of vice which they recognised as such. It is true that it was mostly social salvage work--even with the great Lord Shaftesbury, who gladly traced his inspiration to John Wesley. But to complain that these men were not communally constructive, and had not great Christian sociology, is to lose all time-sense and accuse them for not being born a century or two later than they were.⁷⁷

Wesley's contribution to our understanding of agape and Christian perfection certainly sharpens our consciousness for greater social responsibility in our present global situation. It is unfortunate that many in our religious institutions have lost sight of the true implication of agape. Some have espoused a personalistic approach ignoring the importance of social transformation. Others have chosen to engage actively, even radically, in social change without a clear notion as to why they seek the change. Wesley's life and teachings are unique and refreshing. They provide a source of inspiration as well as a long overdue perspective. To be genuinely Christian, therefore, we must commence in the work of love and commit ourselves on all levels--church, community, nation, and world--to combat the human inequalities, injustices, and conflicts that are presently plaguing our civilization. The one that strikes us challengingly is our global plight of hunger and starvation. It is not an

⁷⁷Sangster, p. 89.

isolated problem. It is directly tied to our many systems that determine our well-being and destiny--economic, political, social, educational, cultural, and religious. Our ethical responsibility expressed in Jesus Christ and more recently in John Wesley henceforth is to be responsive with love and social justice. Our failure to do so means only irresponsibility.

Chapter 4

THE PROBLEM OF GLOBAL HUNGER

One of the most crucial issues facing humankind at the present time is global hunger. Hunger is not a new phenomenon for it has existed as far back as memory can take us. As Americans many of us have been insulated from the sharp pangs and the real agony of hunger. While our television screens have brought into our living rooms the scope of this problem, they have also contributed to the callousness of our attitudes. In our opulence where goods and services seem limitless, hunger becomes unimaginable. For most of us hunger means a temporary discomfort that is quickly solved by a jaunt to the refrigerator or a stop at the nearest coffee shop.

AN OVERVIEW

The problem of hunger is most serious. It plagues our neighbors in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Hunger kills.

The victim of starvation burns up his own body fats, muscles and tissues for fuel. His body quite literally consumes itself and deteriorates rapidly. The kidneys, liver and endocrine system often cease to function properly. A shortage of carbohydrates, which play a vital role in brain chemistry, affects the mind. Lassitude and confusion set in, so that starvation victims often seem unaware of their own plight. The body's defenses drop; disease kills most famine victims before they have time to starve to death. An individual begins to starve when he has lost about a third of his normal

weight. Once this loss exceeds 40%, death is almost inevitable.¹

It it fails to kill, it leaves the victims scarred for life. The consequences of a deformed body, a retarded intelligence, and a defeated spirit hold little promise. There are no fortunate hunger victims.

The term hunger can be defined in two ways: undernourishment or malnourishment. Undernourishment indicates inadequacy in the diet in relation to quantity. Malnourishment indicates inadequacy in the diet in relation to quality.² Where hunger thrives in the Third World nations, it is most often accompanied by disease. The lack of protein leads to kwashiorkor, a disease characterized by tissues swollen with fluid and a scaly skin rash. A common sight is a child with a bulging belly and red hair. The deficiency of vitamin D causes rickets and resultant soft, deformed bones. Where vitamin B₁ (thiamine) is lacking, beriberi sets in affecting the heart, the circulatory system, and the brain. Without sufficient niacin (a member of vitamin-B complex family), pellagra takes its toll with its "four Ds"--dermatitis, diarrhea, dementia, and death.³

The hunger problem can no longer be conceived as an

¹"How Hunger Kills," Time, CIV (November 11, 1974), 68.

²M. Darrol Bryant, A World Broken by Unshared Bread (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970), p. 31.

³"How Hunger Kills," p. 68.

isolated occurrence. It is affecting groups of nations and large regions of continents. Its gravity is baffling to the mind. In our world, fifteen thousand people starve to death weekly. Nearly half a billion people are stricken with hunger and all its damaging effects. Pope Paul VI still speaks with relevancy with the following statement of 1967:

Today no one can be ignorant any longer of the fact that in whole continents countless men and women are ravished by hunger, countless children are under-nourished, so that many of them die in infancy, while the physical growth and mental development of many others are retarded and as a result whole regions are condemned to the most distressing dependency.⁴

If we include those who not only lack the required calories, but those below necessary protein and nutrient level, who are unable to function in full capacity, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, from one to two billion might be classified as hungry. Close to half are young children in pockets of poverty.⁵

On this matter of hunger, we have seen the swing of the pendulum from pessimism to optimism and back to pessimism. In its 1961 analysis of the food situation, the United States Department of Agriculture gave this report:

Diets are nutritionally adequate in the 30 industrialized nations in the temperate Northern Area which account for a third of mankind--more than 900 million people. Their production of food and things they can trade for food assures their supply, now and for the

⁴Martin M. McLaughlin, "Dealing with the World Food Crisis," Current, CLXV (September 1974), 16.

⁵Arthur Simon, Bread for the World (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp. 3-4.

foreseeable future.

For most of the 70 less-developed countries in the semitropical and tropical Southern Area, diets are nutritionally inadequate, with shortages in proteins, fats, and calories. These (diet deficit) countries contain over 1.9 billion people. In most of them, population is expanding rapidly, malnutrition is widespread and persistent, and there is no likelihood that the food problem soon will be solved.⁶

With such a report, the Malthusian view that the power of population is greater than the power of the earth to feed its people seemed accurate.

Optimism lifted the dark cloud when the Green Revolution gave us temporary promise. Through the research funded by the Rockefeller Foundation under the directorship of Dr. Norman Borlaug, the "dwarf wheat" was developed. Its responsiveness to fertilizer, its thickness in stem, and its insensitivity to the length of the growing day made it high yielding as well as adaptable to the climate of the poor nations. India was able to increase its wheat production from 11 million tons to 26 million between 1965 to 1972. For this new breakthrough Borlaug was awarded the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize and is proclaimed the founder of the Green Revolution. A dwarf rice strain similar to the wheat variety added to the impetus of this agricultural phenomenon. This effort was credited to Dr. Robert Chandler at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, a combined project of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation. These developments in the sixties provided a

⁶Thomas T. Poleman, "World Food: A Perspective," Science, CLXXXVIII (May 9, 1975), 511.

glimmer of hope to the world food shortage. Both India and the Philippines acclaimed self-sufficiency in these grains. Gunnar Myrdal's words seemed to portend what was yet to come after 1968.

I am open to the possibility of an agricultural revolution. But I say to my friends at Harvard and in Washington that you are living in a sort of euphoria.

I'm not blind to the possibility of doing great things with technology. But if you don't change the relationship between land and man, it will benefit mostly the upper classes. It may leave the underclasses worse off than before.

Don't believe only in technology.⁷

And then in 1972 the pendulum swung back. Once again the future of our hungry nations looked dismal. In the summer of 1972 the Soviet Union grain production was curtailed by bad weather. In a secretive manner and at bargain prices they bought 19 million tons of grain from the U.S. alone. To keep the soybean and food prices low at home, the U.S. called for a soybean embargo. Nevertheless, the demand for grain kept rising hurting mostly the lesser developed nations. While the soybeans reached a record high of \$12.00 in 1973, in 1974, wheat was close to \$6.00 a bushel, corn at a record \$3.49; and Maine potatoes which had cost \$2.00 per hundred pounds at one time soared to \$19.05.⁸ The Soviet Union, by reducing its export of grain to Eastern Europe from 6 million tons to 1.7 million tons, aggravated the situation further.

⁷Ed Edwin, Feast or Famine (New York: Charterhouse, 1974), p. 39.

⁸Ibid., p. 27.

Not only had bad weather affected crops in the Soviet Union, it took damaging effect world-wide. India, Africa, parts of China, and the United States. As one author puts it:

The most dangerous thing that could have happened in the face of these conditions did happen--world food production fell in 1972 for the first time in two decades. World grain production fell even more sharply, about 35 million tons, compared with an annual increase in world consumption of about 2.5 million tons.⁹

By October of 1973 the oil embargo added to the already spiraling prices for the hungry people on our planet. The quadrupling of fuel costs raised the price of fertilizer and paralyzed the water pumps which contributed so much to the success of the Green Revolution. As the prices had gone up, the grain reserves had gone down. While the reserves had grown to 170 million tons of grain in 1961 which could last us 95 days, by 1974 this supply had plummeted to a low of 22 days.

HUNGER AS A MORAL ISSUE

The problem of world hunger is not only a matter of controlling the population growth and increasing the food production, it has presently become a moral issue. It raises questions on people's right to food, the necessity of the haves to assist the have-nots, the building of more equitable economic and political structures, and responding

⁹Harry Walters, "Difficult Issues Underlying Food Problems," Science, CLXXXVIII (May 9, 1975), 527.

to human need with love and justice. The present crisis of hunger is a subject of ethics for our inaction had its consequences. The disaster in the Sahel, the Sub-Saharan region of Africa, is a case in point. In reviewing this situation from a moral, political, and economic perspective, Terence McCarthy makes this remark:

There is, of course, another option for individual nations: to concentrate upon national needs and to let the rest of the world, or any part of it, starve or feast as crops dictate. Substantially, this is what the world at first did to the peoples of the Sub-Sahara (the Sahel) in 1974.¹⁰

Before aid has reached this afflicted area where drought was in its fifth year, it is estimated that 100,000 lives became victims of starvation and death. Consequently, seven million persons of the total population of twelve million persons from various African states: Niger, Mauritania, western Ethiopia, Upper Volta, Mali, Chad, and parts of Senegal, Kenya, Nigeria, and Dahomey, cannot go the survival route alone without aid. The future of these Africans along with the future of the Asians and Latin Americans will now be determined, to a large degree, by the response from the rest of the world, the rich nations.

Two proposals in regard to human response to the hungry world are the ethics of triage and the lifeboat ethics. The ethics of triage is advocated by the Paddock brothers and it is based on medical treatment given to the

¹⁰Terence McCarthy, "Feast or Famine: The Choices for Man-Kind," Ramparts, XIII (September 1974), 31.

wounded at wartime. It follows three categories of the injured:

(1) Those so seriously wounded they cannot survive regardless of the treatment given them; call these the "can't-be-saved."

(2) Those who can survive without treatment regardless of the pain they may be suffering; call these the "walking wounded."

(3) Those who can be saved by immediate medical care.¹¹

In the same manner triage suggests that nations be divided into corresponding classifications. Those whose population has grown out of hand and whose situation is hopeless be given no aid. And the nations that can make it on their own also be awarded no aid. Only those that can possibly make it with careful planning and leadership be assisted with food aid.

The lifeboat ethic is strongly supported by Garrett Hardin, a biologist.¹² Ironically, Hardin chooses the metaphor of a lifeboat rather than a spaceship whereas it is the latter that comes closer to describing our global circumstance. The lifeboat is the rich nation afloat with limited capacity. Those swimming around are the poor nations and additions to the lifeboat means everyone drowns, thus, the only alternative is the refusal to assist the poor.

The failure of these two approaches is the denial

¹¹William and Paul Paddock, Famine--1975 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 207.

¹²Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics, the Case Against Helping the Poor," Psychology Today, VIII (September 1974), pp. 38-40.

that at present there is enough food in the world provided certain sacrifices be made. They do not recognize that the plight of the hungry is caused, to a degree, by the unjust systems perpetuated by the rich nations. Another weakness is its assumption that the lesser nations will respond to our attitude and actions in passivity.

The trouble with the lifeboat metaphor applied to the hunger crisis in the world today is that we are not dealing with people who can be beaten back and then left to die in watery graves. Two billion people are not going to accept the verdict of the well-fed that they must go under in the long-term interests of the species. Nor are they going to allow their lives to dangle on a scholar's metaphor. They may be low on energy, but they will find whatever reserves of spirit and will they need to fight back. Long before the demographic breakdown is apt to occur, we are likely to have a political and ideological earthquake touched off by the disparity between the few who have more food than they can eat and the many who are unable to subsist.¹³

Human life in both of these methods is highly disregarded. When we speak of hunger we are speaking about people, warm bodies. We are not beasts of the jungle, we are children of God each having a purpose and a contribution to make. If we fail to see the rest of the world in this way, we undermine our basic humanity, our capacity to love.

Robert Brown comes closer to the crux of the issue when he identifies hunger as the problem of injustice. The systems we have built keep the poor where they are and even drive them deeper into poverty while the rich get richer. His broader view merits our consideration. He cites

¹³Norman Cousins, "Lifeboat Ethics," Saturday Review, III (October 18, 1975), 4.

these examples to accent his point:

Example: we will feed refugees in Cambodia and Vietnam, and that is good. But in large measure we ourselves created those refugees. We napalmed their villages, we defoliated their forests, we rendered their ricefields unploughable. So the problem of hunger is exacerbated by the ugly reality of militarism.

Example: we have food stamps for blacks in American ghettos who don't have enough money to pay regular prices. It is good that they get food, but we have created conditions that make it impossible for them to have an adequate earning capacity. We have segregated their housing, denied them first-rate schooling, and thereby effectively closed off all kinds of jobs to them. So the problem of hunger is exacerbated by the ugly reality of racism.

Example: there are thousands of people in Chile who are starving because inflation rates have soared out of sight and the Chilean government will do nothing about it. And that government, the military junta, seized power and remains in power with American connivance and help; our country finances starvation on the outskirts of Valparaiso. So the problem of hunger is exacerbated by the ugly reality of imperialism.¹⁴

These are indeed pungent words, but the truth which they unveil cannot be ignored. Because of our interdependence as a people, our only alternative is that of sharing, after all, this is what love and justice require.

If we wish to respond to the problem effectively and efficiently, it becomes essential that we have a more thorough understanding of what hunger is all about. To love therefore means to know as much as possible the quandary of our neighbors. Hunger has a galaxy of causes which makes the problem most complex. Let us examine more carefully some of them: population growth, ecological factors, the

¹⁴Robert McAfee Brown, "A Declaration of Interdependence," Ramparts, XIII (July 1975), 44.

colonial legacy and neo-colonialism, U.S. foreign policy, and affluence.

CAUSES

Population Growth

The population of the world is now four billion and still accelerating. Increasing at an annual rate of two percent, it will double in thirty-five years. During the twentieth century alone we have seen it more than quadruple. In the United States we add two million people per year. The culprit for this unprecedented increase is not fertility, it is our ability through the advancement of science, medicine, and health care, to decrease the death rate. We have affected infant mortality, overcome devastating epidemics, and extended the life span. From twenty-four years before the Industrial Revolution, the average length of life was raised to forty-five by 1900, and it is now fifty-two in developing nations and seventy-one in the developed nations.¹⁵ As Peter Adamson would say: "It's not that we've suddenly started breeding like rabbits. It's just that we've stopped dying like flies."¹⁶

With the dramatic rise of the world's population,

¹⁵John T. Conner, "An Overview: World Population Year," Engage/Social Action, II (May 1974), 7.

¹⁶Peter Adamson, "Population Policy and a Development Policy, Are One and the Same Thing," New International, XV (May 1974), 7.

concern was stirred in the West. Part of the zeal in the 1960s can be attributed to "the white man's fear" of a pending threat, so it was viewed, of the jobless, the hungry, and the poor.¹⁷ But the interest to control population growth was not a "capitalist conspiracy."¹⁸ What ensued nevertheless was an expensive mistake.

The coil, loop, and pill were believed to be the simple answer. Of course, the target was the peoples of the Third World in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Millions of dollars from the rich nations went to work. We found out that most poor people want and need large families. And unlike the developed nations, children in the developing nations are assets instead of burdens to the family budget.¹⁹

The Khanna Study,²⁰ a project initiated by Harvard University and financed by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Indian government, was such a failure. It took six years and a million dollars before we learned that children are contributors to the well-being of an Indian family at low cost. They lighten the workload and act as an insurance to the poor where life is short or vulnerable to disease.

W. Ahmed²¹ points out that the clinics and mass

¹⁷Pierre Pradervand, "The Malthusian Man," New International, XV (May 1974), 11.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Adamson, p. 7.

²⁰"The Myth of Population Control," New International, XV (May 1974), 5.

²¹W. Ahmed, "Population Policy and the Peasant," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, XXX (June 1974), 29-30.

media failed because they were unable to contend with the influence of granny midwives, witch doctors, practitioners of ancient systems, friends, and relatives. Prevalent in Latin America, "machismo" is practiced by the men where virility is proven by begetting many children. The uneducated, unskilled women contribute by their ability to conceive and rear children. Now it should appall us to know what has been done in the name of birth control.

In some cases, programmes were designed with the sole aim of getting women to adopt family planning without changing a single thing in their environment of dismal poverty (Tegucigalpa, late 1960s); or experts were dropped via helicopters on unsuspecting Himalayan villages (Nepal, 1970); or Moslem women were coerced into buses to have loops inserted without any explanations (Tunisia, mid 1970s); or young women were given contraceptive injections against their husbands' will (various African countries).²²

Our experience has taught us that family planning practices in isolation without improvement of the environment lead only to failure. Population growth is closely related to the conditions of poverty. Poverty adds fuel to birth rates just as the massive populations can jeopardize the overcoming of poverty. Population increase certainly makes economic development a difficult process. However, it does not necessarily stifle economic development.²³ What our failures in the 1960s have taught us, therefore, is that to reduce population growth, we must overcome the conditions

²²Pradervand, p. 13.

²³Gunnar Myrdal, "First We Must Change Society," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, XXX (June 1974), 37.

of poverty. We have also come to realize that where the birth rate is least, the quality of life of the people has improved greatly.

Ecological Factors

In recent years our awareness of the ecological limitations have caused us to take a new attitude toward science and technology, and toward our whole earth. As Christians, if we have not done this yet, we should also have re-examined the heritage of religious values and traditional beliefs. While we can be guided by the Christian mandate to love, we must reform the position we have espoused in respect to nature. The crisis took place in the Garden of Eden story. In the creation episode man and woman were instructed to have dominion over the land. History informs us that what ensued is not our harmonizing with nature, but our very exploitation of it. Where there was reverence for nature before the outset of our Judeo-Christian impact, though a superstitious stand, the ancient attitude was changed. Lynn White names Christianity as the culprit:

In antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. . . . By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.²⁴

And White clearly illustrates the rise of science in the

²⁴Lynn T. White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," in The Environmental Handbook (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), pp. 20-21.

framework of our Christian tradition.

It is time that we perceive ourselves on a spaceship, the only craft with which we have been endowed by our Creator. Thus our cowboy mentality is anachronistic. As the Club of Rome has concluded, there are no technological solutions to some of our more basic social problems.²⁵ Hence, we must take seriously the necessity to place limits to our growth in pollution, population, and production.

In our ignorance of the laws of nature and our desire to control the course of nature, we have reaped the consequences of eco-disasters. With the tremendous increase of the cattle population in the Sahel, from 18 million to 25 million in eleven years, the carrying capacity of the land was exceeded.²⁶ The result was overgrazing and deforestation. Helped by the lengthy drought, the Sahara is expanding some thirty miles annually. To the Thar Desert in India we are losing 30,000 acres of valuable agricultural land for the same reasons. Human carelessness and extremes of weather have merciless effects--floods in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.

The modern scenario of technology continues to flash before us the devastation of our food producing earth. The Aswan Dam in Egypt, designed for wider irrigation and

²⁵Donella H. Meadows, et al., The Limits to Growth (New York: Universe Books, 1972), pp. 149-50.

²⁶McCarthy, p. 31.

increased electrical supply, has its reverse ecological outcomes--high reduction of fertile silt deposits in the Nile Valley, decline of the fish population, the driving of subsistence farmers (Damodar Valley) to higher slopes in continuation of the slash and burn system, and the breeding of bilharziasis (Schistosomiasis) which thrives in water-based areas. Our chemical base fertilizers and pesticides continue to pollute our waterways endangering both human and animal life. Besides, synthetic chemicals take years to decompose. Our technologically improved fishing methods are depleting the fish supply. For example, the Peruvian anchovy, yielding as much as 12 million tons, took a precipitous drop to 2 million in 1973. The irony of science and technology plays with our enjoyment and our destruction.

Both the development of atomic science and the piecing together of the planets and of man's evolution--master intellectual achievements of modern times--have provided a solid basis for a completely new appreciation of the unity, interdependence, and precariousness of the human condition. . . . The unraveling of atomic structure and the unfolding of our biological history thus offer a remarkable paradox. On the one hand, nuclear power gives man the means of self-annihilation. On the other, the delicacy and balance of the evolutionary process offers him the perspective he needs to avoid planetary suicide.²⁷

Colonial Legacy and Neo-Colonism

The hunger problem that threatens the fate of two-thirds of the world's population can trace its origin also

²⁷ Barbara Ward Jackson and René Dubos, Only One Earth (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 44.

to our legacy from colonism. Those so-called "mother countries"--Portugal, Spain, England, France, Netherlands, Germany, Italy--explored new territories primarily for the benefit of their domestic economy, not their colonies'.

Arthur Simon states this fact bluntly:

First, start with a period under colonial rule. Most of today's poor countries are left with systems--transportation, communications, cash crops, industries, and others--that were developed to enrich the ruling country. Political independence does not always prevent those systems from continuing to serve the same purpose.²⁸

Gold, spices, and slaves from these territories were sought. Our colonial history is a sad scenario of disruptions: the destruction of socio-cultural, economic, political, and agricultural systems by colonizers. And more important, the colonizers failed to bring these societies into modernity.

In his "Thoughts on Slavery" John Wesley effectively conveyed that slave traders razed the African settlements undermining their stability. The Sahara was held in check until Spanish domination destroyed the political and social structures of the Africans.²⁹ Latin America's fate proved just as unfortunate. Thomas Bailey reports that by 1574 five million Indians had submitted to one hundred sixty thousand Spanish settlers.³⁰ Our colonial legacy is not a proud one.

²⁸Simon, p. 91. ²⁹McCarthy, p. 31.

³⁰Thomas A. Bailey, The American Pageant (Boston: Heath, 1971), p. 10.

The bitter legacy of this era can be partially indicated as follows: 1. economic dependency on the unstable markets controlled by the developed nations along with the disruption of the minimal economic organization of the countries of the Third World, 2. the generation of deep suspicions of the dignity and strength of the indigenous peoples and cultures under the impact of the forces of Europe, and 3. the elevation of the West to the status of model for the material development of the rest of the world. These currents run deep in our history and are not easily exorcised.³¹

Our present problem runs like a river, its source being our legacy from colonialism, its water presently polluted by the inequity of our trade system and economic disadvantages of the poor, is delivered to us in the form of neo-colonialism. Our difficulty still lies in the imbalance of economic power. As a possible step toward cooperation which would have helped the poorer nations, in 1968 a session of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference of Trade and Development) in New Delhi was held. Myrdal called this an "almost complete failure."³² The agreement to grant preferential treatment to the developing nations would have assisted the equalization of trade benefits, but this effort was defeated, the U.S. being one of its strongest opposers. Any shift toward the favor of the developing countries seems unlikely.

The growth and expansion of the multi-national corporations appear to be another form of neo-colonialism and the economic strength of developing nations to withstand

³¹Bryant, p. 14.

³²Gunnar Myrdal, The Challenge of World Poverty (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), pp. 301-9.

them is in question. The ill effects and the favorable contribution made by these foreign investors need further analysis in the years to come. This modern day phenomenon seems more frightening than promising. Barnet and Muller, in Global Outreach, point out that multi-national corporations in the Third World are overtaking small businesses, capital in the hands of the elite are invested abroad rather than in shaky economies, and through communications, the poor are becoming consumers with expensive Western tastes.³³ The undermining of Salvador Allende's administration in Chile by the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation is a good enough reason for us to be earnestly concerned. Operating without borders nor necessary government control, it is more likely that these corporate giants will be our oppressors and exploiters rather than our humble servants.

United States Foreign Policy

Although our American foreign policy has had its good intentions, there have been developments that have worked against hungry people. Unfortunately, fear, self-interest, and wrong priorities in our foreign aid program have undercut much of our humanitarian efforts and our sense of goodwill.

Take the enactment of Public Law 480, also known as

³³Richard J. Barnet and Ronald E. Muller, Global Reach (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 123-47.

the Food for Peace Program, as an example. It was initiated "to develop and expand export markets for United States agricultural commodities," in other words, to dispose of surplus foods.³⁴ Under Title I food is sold as a loan with low interest. The U.S. sold 50 percent of that food in a given year to two war stricken countries--Cambodia and South Vietnam. Unfortunately, military interests have taken priority over our humanitarian interests which are based on the greatness of need in poor nations. Under Title II food is given as grants to governments, voluntary agencies, and the United Nations World Food Programme. When needed most in 1972, in the midst of famine, food aid took its biggest cut.

Myrdal offers some very sharp criticisms of our foreign policy primarily because of our extreme concern over Communism.³⁵ We can certainly say that the Marshall Plan carried humanitarian interest, but Myrdal points out that a motivational factor was anti-Communism. U.S. foreign policy has had this ring ever since. The investment of our resources had their impact on the development of needy countries without a doubt, but development did suffer because of our militaristic approach. The involvement that weighed heaviest on our government and our people was our blind and obsessed involvement in Vietnam. We are still nursing the wounds from that struggle. Much was sacrificed in terms of

³⁴Simon, p. 117.

³⁵Myrdal, Challenge, pp. 341-63.

energies, resources, and lives. And more hungry people were added.

Following John F. Kennedy's proposal, the United Nations declared the 1960s the Development Decade. According to Myrdal, the error of the United States was tying foreign assistance to American exports. He says that "the high prices attached to these gifts often imply, or seem to imply, an unjustified padding of the amount of aid."³⁶ Coupled with our anti-Communism campaign, our foreign aid became less a form of aid. The Alliance for Progress supposedly aimed at raising Latin Americans out of poverty, had as its main interest, the containment of Castro. The threat of Castro subsided and as historical events demonstrate, the Alliance for Progress went by the wayside.

The adoption of a military complexion has stifled our effectiveness both abroad and at home. Rather than the leveling of our military budget, it has been on the rise: \$78 billion in 1974, \$85 billion in 1975, \$94 billion in 1976. What each American pays the government has a staggering breakdown:

- \$450 for current military costs
- 35 for education
- 17 for job training and employment
- 18 for housing
- 37 for natural resources and the environment
- 6 for economic assistance to hungry nations (The \$6 figure is based on unpadded accounting.)³⁷

Our lopsided budget favoring military purposes is wasteful

³⁶Ibid., p. 359.

³⁷Simon, p. 124.

and an act against humanity when we know that millions are starving and dying.

Affluence

To be only apalled by the rising population of the Third World without concern for the ravish appetite of the affluent citizens in the developed world is to miss an important causal factor to world hunger. The smaller population of one billion people in the richer areas of our globe including North America, Europe, Russia, Japan, Australasia, should not fool us. Our consumption rates have great impact on the world's food supply. Lester Brown illustrates this in these terms:

In the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the per capita availability of grain is only about 400 pounds per year, or about a pound a day. When only this much grain is available, nearly all of it must be consumed directly to meet minimal energy needs. In North America, by contrast, the average person consumes nearly one ton of grain per year (Table 3-2). Of this, about 200 pounds is consumed directly in the form of bread, pastries, and breakfast cereals. Most of the remainder is consumed indirectly, in the form of meat, milk, and eggs. Also included in indirect per capita consumption is 35 pounds of grain in the form of domestically produced alcoholic beverages, principally beer and bourbon.³⁸

The higher demand on grain made by the affluent lifestyle of the rich is reason for serious self-evaluation. It is fact that when economic standards rise, dietary habits turn from grain products to the luxury of meat products.

³⁸Lester R. Brown, By Bread Alone (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 39.

Seven pounds of grain are required to produce one pound of beef. Of 400 million tons in 1974 one-third was utilized for livestock feed. Jean Mayer, a Harvard nutritionist observes, "If Americans would decrease the meat they eat by 10 per cent, it would release enough grain to feed 60 million people."³⁹ Our plentitude of food has made hunger seem so remote, our insensitivity has led to great wastes as well, reducing further what might have gone to the hungry nations.

Our irresponsibility in stewardship of our environmental resources endangers our very life itself. Ward and Dubos in Only One Earth describe our extravagance according to 1968 figures. They cite that an American child consumes 13 metric tons of coal equivalent (or 2700 gallons of gasoline) in energy. In appliances and artifacts 150 kilograms of copper and lead, 100 kilograms of aluminum and zinc are used. Particularly for the automobile, but other items included, 10 metric tons of steel are required. Of our limited natural resources 75 percent are utilized by only 33 percent of the world's population.⁴⁰ Our world will not stand such an injustice ecologically nor socially. Unless we apply our resources more directly to food production, unless we promote the interest of the poor and hungry, we will

³⁹"How to Ease the Hunger Pangs," Newsweek, LXXXIV (November 11, 1974), 67.

⁴⁰Jackson and Dubos, pp. 118-9.

undermine the basic foundation of all human existence.

Our examination of these five causes of global hunger is in no way exhaustive. The urgency for action is self-evident. The various causal factors rather than simplifying the subject complicate it further. There is no single solution to the dilemma. It is my opinion that much valuable time has been lost and certain disasters are inevitable. Nature has already taken its adverse course against the environment and against the lives it was meant to sustain. Nevertheless, there is still time to minimize great ecocatastrophes and human conflicts. Inaction is no sound alternative. In our broken life there is a source of hope, there is a definite direction to go, and there is a sense of ultimate meaning. Our Christian heritage, with all the misrepresentations induced by human interpretations, calls us to the life of love. In our love for all persons, we are to build on responsible citizenship and structures of justice. Our challenge is to provide some viable solutions to the crisis of global hunger.

Chapter 5

STRATEGIES OF RESPONSE

The complexity of hunger makes it a difficult problem and our efforts cannot be simplistic or isolated. We who are members of the Christian community should speak to this pressing issue of global hunger. We need to be involved in both the setting of priorities in government and in changing the policies of government which affect the hungry nations. We need to organize ourselves individually and collectively to reverse the forces perpetuating injustice in our societal structures and systems. A more united effort is required.

NEEDED: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

A Change in U.S.
Foreign Policy

At the present moment there needs to be, in addition to an increase in foreign assistance, a long-range commitment toward aid from the developed nations to the developing ones. How easily we have forgotten that America was not built in a day or a year. The decrease in our foreign aid results from our own arrogance especially when struggling nations show little gratitude, but we have refused to recognize our suspicion of the poor and our blunders in helping them. Among the sixteen donor nations we rank fourteenth

in development assistance based on the percentage of our gross national product.¹ The desire of our people must be expressed more fully for our present governmental attitude runs against the tide of public sentiment. Many Americans believe in helping other nations beyond economic or political reasons.

The Overseas Development Council survey cited above clearly indicated that the American people want to help because it is the right thing to do--not because of world markets, competition with Communism, or fear that raw materials will be cut off by the undernourished developing countries.²

From the American venture in foreign relations we have come to the understanding that unilateral posturing has many shortcomings. In effect it is an anachronism. We must turn more and more to multilateral assistance to developing nations. In his analysis of our foreign policy, Myrdal has come to this very conclusion.³ He indicates that aid policies should be morally neutral and multilateral efforts would do just that. He rightly calls for preferential treatment of poor nations, less strings attached to exports, and the serving of human needs in poverty areas, not self-interest of the powerful.

George C. Lodge proposed in his Engines for Chance

¹Arthur Simon, "The Food Crisis," Commonweal, C (July 14, 1974), 67.

²Martin M. McLaughlin, "Dealing with the World Food Crisis," Current, CLXV (September 1974), 18.

³Gunnar Myrdal, The Challenge of World Poverty (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), pp. 376-85.

that our Agency for International Development (AID) be replaced by another structure based on multilateral programming.⁴ Having his focus on Latin America, the Alliance for Progress would be transformed into what Lodge would call the New Alliance. Funds from the U.S. and Europe would be channeled through the Inter-American Committee of the Alliance for Progress (CIAP), a branch of the United Nations. Lodge also proposes the establishment by Congress of an American Foundation which would utilize resources of non-governmental sectors in the U.S. It would work with groups not currently reached by government interchange--unions, universities, corporations. In addition, Lodge suggests the formation of an internationalized Peace Corps which would absorb our present one. With the failure of the Alliance for Progress, these appear to be some viable options in the area of foreign development assistance.

Toward Socio-Economic Development

The food and population crisis can only be met if we take a hard look at the many forces contributing to it. The World Population Conference held at Bucharest listed as foremost the social and economic development of peoples and nations. The resolutions which were adopted therefore pertained to population and development, resources and

⁴George C. Lodge, Engines of Change (New York: Knopf, 1970), pp. 368-84.

environment, the family, rural conditions, food supplies, the status of women, and the independence from colonial domination along with the condemnation of the regimes suppressing minorities.⁵ By giving the poor a sense of hope and by improving the quality of life, we will be on our way toward combating the menace of world hunger. In part, the answer seems to lie in development--the building of new structures in human society.

Emphasis on Agriculture

With the larger segment of the world's population living in the rural areas where agriculture is deficient, there needs to be a new emphasis toward its development and improvement. Compared to the modern mechanized farm practices, small intensively cared plots can yield more.⁶ This is a promising potentiality. Simon proffers three basic steps for farm development.⁷ First he points out that agriculture in poor nations must be labor-intensive, not capital-intensive. This is most feasible where lack of employment is rampant. Second, there needs to be land reform. Asia and Latin America's absentee ownerships of land and Africa's arbitrary land control by tribal chiefs stifle

⁵"Economic and Social," UN Monthly Chronicle, IX (August-September 1974), 97.

⁶Lester R. Brown, By Bread Alone (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 214.

⁷Arthur Simon, Bread for the World (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), pp. 63-64.

farmer incentive. And third, Simon states that industrial development must be related to rural development. By concentrating on agriculture implements and services, industry will play a complementary role to rural development and farm life.

The task of the Third World government is a gigantic one more so when agricultural development signifies the building of a rural infrastructure. Roads, distribution outlets, better credits, improved seed varieties, fair stable prices, extension services, farm supplies (tools, fertilizers, pesticides), and energy sources--all of these are essential to rural development. For a transformation in agriculture to take place, Lester Brown cites the necessity for international support.

In many poor countries rapid agricultural development will not be possible without international support to complement a strong political commitment to agrarian progress on the part of developing-country governments. Both bilateral and multilateral aid agencies can help to finance the tools, fertilizers, machinery, research, and technical advice that are necessary. Outside aid cannot substitute for a strong commitment to progress and proper allocation of resources on the part of developing countries themselves, but it can provide the government of a poor country with part of the resources it needs if development efforts are to have a chance of success.⁸

William Cochrane adds that developed nations can help agricultural societies by building a whole variety of institutions:

. . . universities, research laboratories, credit organizations, private and cooperative marketing

⁸Brown, p. 217.

organizations, planning commissions, fertilizer factories, secondary vocational schools, a ministry of transport, a public health service, a family planning service, an export marketing, and many more.⁹

As a word of caution it should be mentioned that agricultural development should be done with care so it benefits the people of poor nations, not the rich as done in the past. We have yet to learn how this balance can be shifted. More research must be done in tropical climates since our present knowledge comes from temperate climates of developed nations. With the dire need for food products, cash crops such as coffee must be replaced by food crops. In our zeal to help the afflicted nations, we should constantly remind ourselves of our tendency to make others like Westerners. And so many of the Third World structures have been built to profit the rich. Basic necessities are more important than Sears-Roebuck's items, the luxuries of cars and Cokes, or such middle class urges for potato chips and French fries.

Adoption of a Population Policy

An effective development process in the needy countries along with a direct effort to limit the birth rate will definitely make greater inroads into solving global hunger and starvation. All governments, rich and poor alike, out of the necessity to maintain a balance between

⁹Willard W. Cochrane, The World Food Problem (New York: Crowell, 1969), p. 263.

the human population and the environment, are required to promote smaller families. Call it a moral mandate or biological necessity, it has to be done for human survival. In effect, the adoption of a population policy by nations is a must. Better health services, better distribution of birth control information and contraceptives, and added privileges (tax advantages, housing preference, etc.) to smaller families--all of these will help our cause.

Equal Status of Women

The equal status of women is long overdue. The incorporation of women into the total life of society will be beneficial to the well-being of women as well as men. Bearing children is just one of the many functions women can perform; it is not the only one. Especially in the developing countries, it is important to foster the active involvement of women. "Fuller integration of women around the world into the development process through great participation in educational, social, economic, and political opportunities is a fundamental factor in population stabilization."¹⁰

World Reserve System

During the Nixon administration our reserve system lost its priority, but it should be given a much greater emphasis especially now. After the bad occurrences in 1972

¹⁰ John T. Conner, "An Overview: World Population Year," Engage/Social Action, II (May 1974), 15.

where we saw bad weather reduce drastically grain production, thus, almost depleting our grain reserves and causing a spiral in prices, our future should be safeguarded from a repeat performance. We need stabilized grain reserves. During 1973 the Director General of the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) proposed global cooperation in grain reserves. Supported by the World Food Conference held in 1974, such reserves can assist the deficit nations in acquiring sufficient quantity of food at stable prices. Although the United States and Canada have carried the largest part in grain reserves, it is time that such reserves be managed internationally.

Research

In the area of research much is yet to be done. Modern agriculture is based fundamentally in temperate zones and on capital-intensive patterns. There has always been a gulf between farming in the developing world and the developed world. Training of Third World students in the universities of affluent countries has had a great limitation and disadvantage. Transferring our modern technology to tropical areas has been difficult and often impractical. Lester Brown states that there is a great dearth of knowledge concerning tropical agriculture and he proposes further research in those areas for higher food production.¹¹ As

¹¹Brown, pp. 235-6.

examples he mentions the need for dryland crops such as sorghum and millet for regions too dry to benefit from the new miracle wheats and rices. Also needed are cassava varieties with higher yields in protein. Brown is encouraged by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research which is involved in such a research. It is backed by the FAO, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other organizations. This effort has a world-wide base with six centers:

International Wheat and Maize Improvement Center, Mexico
 International Rice Research Institute, Philippines
 International Center for Tropical Agriculture, Columbia
 International Potato Center, Peru
 International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, India
 International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Nigeria

For Brown the mentioned areas of study are not enough. He would like to see research expanded to include crops for particular countries or regions for larger output.

New Sources of Food and New Technology

The question that is asked frequently is, what are the possibilities of new sources of food and new technology? Yes, what about them? For instance, we can farm the sea as an alternative source of food. Algae combined with a new created mix called Incarpina--a blend of corn, cottonseed flour, soy flour and amino acids--has been tried.¹² The

¹²"How to Ease Hunger Pangs," Newsweek, LXXXIV (November 11, 1974), 67.

trouble with food from the ocean is the high cost and the difficulty to change human taste. An encouraging project is the grafting of wheat to soybean roots. These can function in a complementary fashion, soybean can manufacture nitrogen for wheat which utilizes it. Its limitation is the high requirement of water and water is presently a problem in itself. Would not desalination of ocean water solve this issue? Although this is a possibility, the hindering factor is the high cost involved.

The world possesses today the technical capacity not only to dam and regulate the flow of streams and rivers, and to drill to depths required to tap geologic deposits of water, but also to desalinate the seas and to transport water, via pipelines, from the seashores to any inland area that we choose. There is literally no need for deserts to exist anywhere on Earth if we decide otherwise--and if we are prepared to pay the price.¹³

A tone of skepticism resounds when it comes to the cultivation of new lands. Some experts are suggesting to increase the present area cultivated, 3.5 billion acres to 6.6 billion acres, most of which are found in Latin America and Africa. To do this it would require an astronomical \$13.2 trillion to bring the 6.6 billion acres into productivity, a high cost indeed. Lester Brown makes this note:

The people who are talking about adding more land are not considering the cost. If you are willing to pay the price, you can farm the slope of Mt. Everest.¹⁴

¹³Terence McCarthy, "Feast or Famine: The Choices for Mankind," Ramparts, XIII (September 1974), 32.

¹⁴"How to Ease Hunger Pangs," p. 62.

A Matter of Human Will

More than our ability to solve the high cost of producing new food sources, the answer lies in our willingness to make the necessary sacrifices for the needy and the hungry. It comes to the matter of human will. The challenge of modern times is to change human habits just as much as creating new technologies. From a most practical level, a scientist participating in a conference at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado commented:

You can't stay alive for long on coffee and cigarettes, although a lot of people try. For the benefit of everyone's health, why not plant corn or soybeans in those fields.¹⁵

The resolution to the hunger issue depends heavily on our willingness to recognize that hunger is not a chronic problem. It demands a long-range effort, an integrated and coordinated approach, where sacrifices are made, rich nations and poor nations working side by side on this long pull. Development of the poverty nations, transformation of extravagant life-styles, and new technologies, these are fundamental components for resolving our enormous problem.

NEEDED: GRASS ROOTS RESPONSE AND
A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our need to respond to the problem of hunger is based not merely on the reason that it is the best American

¹⁵"Formula for World Famine," U.S. News & World Report, LXXVI (January 28, 1974), 52.

thing to do or one of self-preservation, if we do not help the hungry they might retaliate massively and with force. There is something more fundamental than these--Christian agape. In the previous chapters we explored the broad implications of agape and its relation to both justice and responsibility. Our deeper Christian roots take us back to the centrality of Jesus Christ's message, love for all persons regardless of who they are. Love, like a circle, neither has a beginning nor an end. It is all encompassing, it enfolds within its bounds the whole of God's creation, and it symbolizes our oneness: our oneness in humanity, our oneness in times of need and celebration, our oneness in the Spirit of Christ.

Hunger is a devastating predicament. It is degrading to the human spirit and destructive to the physical body. It is a symptom of the injustice and the oppression by human institutions and behavioral patterns. Quoting Deutero-Isaiah, Jesus Christ proclaimed a radical change in the human condition:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has
anointed me to preach good news to the poor
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
(Luke: 4:18-19)

This task remains with us. As true believers and dedicated followers of Christ, we too are summoned to join forces with him to bring liberation to the captives and the oppressed.

The religious institutions of our day have not served as exemplary models on the issue of responsibility and justice, but they should and they can. Just as John Wesley found for all his actions the love of God and the love of neighbor, we can do likewise. The Lord's Supper, prayer, fasting, meditation, worship, study, mission, evangelism--all of these activities of the church can serve as the source for total commitment and the guide for responsible action toward the eradication of hunger, starvation and death. The espousing of Lady Poverty by St. Francis of Assisi points to an alternative, an essential one at that. Having more, extravagance, wastefulness, bigness, limitless growth, economic obsolescence, uncontrolled profits, manipulative advertising--these have been flagrant contributors to the problem. In turn these can be replaced by having less, conservation, stewardship, change in life-styles of consumerism, cooperation rather than pure competition, controlled growth, ecological balance, and sharing. The time has come for a new generation to emerge with a global consciousness living the life of simplicity, humility, and love.

To confine our commitment to personal response is not enough. Granted, we must use less fertilizers on the lawn, drive our cars less, eat less meat, and limit our electrical gadgets. We have come to realize that the problem of hunger is both complex and vast. To accomplish a more effective involvement, agape requires us to exert

influence politically. The impact of government is many, many times greater than an individual's action. But without individual response, government action is unlikely. Moreover, individual actions are necessary, because they intensify our commitment and amplify the necessity for urgent solution. Yet it is the changing of government policies and practices that must follow.

At the present moment, the consciousness and the sensitivity of people on the grass roots level has to be raised. We Americans consider ourselves fortunate and much of it can be credited to hard work and effective utilization of natural resources. Nevertheless, this does not give us the right as a population, six percent of the world's people, to consume almost half of the earth's resources.¹⁶ An American consumes five times the agricultural products required by an Indian, a Colombian, or a Nigerian.¹⁷ This is unfortunate and this is unjust. It is imperative therefore that a response from people on the grass roots level be launched. A plan of action should include an educational process which invokes the elevation of awareness. This also needs to include involvement in the political arena so public policy can be changed where must be. For these reasons I would like to propose a list of things individuals and groups can do.¹⁸

¹⁶McLaughlin, p. 21.

¹⁷Brown, p. 39.

¹⁸Some of these ideas are based on tow sources: Simon, Bread for the World, pp. 144-6 and Resource Guide on

1. Become aware of the problem. There are ample books, newspapers, and periodicals that will provide much information on the seriousness and scope of the problem as well as its broad ramifications.
2. Give to relief organizations, church projects, and special interest groups. A helpful formula for giving is as follows: 1/3 for immediate relief projects, 1/3 for scholarships and research designed to support long-range agricultural development programs of developing nations, and 1/3 for education-action programs at home.
3. Start at home and begin to modify unnecessary consumption habits. Discuss the hunger issue with the family. Sensitizing children at an early age is good planning for a new generation which will be globally conscious and ecologically aware. Explore meatless diets, raise a vegetable garden, reduce the utilization of energy levels whenever possible.
4. Write letters to representatives in Congress. The impact of letters should not be underestimated. It is reported that few letters are received on such topics as foreign policy and public interest has swayed significant political decisions.
5. Sponsor special projects: exhibits, workshops, hunger marches, car washes, audio-visual programs, study groups, discussion groups, field trips, fasts, worship services centered on the Lord's Supper, and coffee hours with elected officials. Involve all age levels: elementary, junior and senior highs, and adults.
6. Establish a communication network. Have the local churches be part of this network staying in touch with and influencing policies of regional and state council of churches, the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the various levels of denominational governments.
7. Encourage the continuing education program. Denominations often sponsor short courses, special schools, and academies. Promote the study of hunger and have the participation of both lay members and clergy.
8. Invite speakers to organization meetings or special programs. There are many resourceful persons to draw from: college professors of economics, political

World Hunger (New York: Council Press for Church World Service, n.d.), pp. 203-4.

science, agriculture, international affairs, development, theology, ethics, and other areas; returned missionaries, ex-Peace Corps volunteers, international students, members from industry and business, and public advocates for justice in government and society.

9. Form working coalitions with special groups. Whatever groups (teachers, social workers, pastors, bankers, farmers) they may be, support causes that promote legislation for better quality of life and more equity in food distribution.

10. Establish a food bank. Churches can do this adequately by encouraging its members to contribute non-perishable food to a food bank to serve hungry and poor persons in the local districts.

11. Modify church practices. Build simpler, less expensive and multi-purpose facilities. Cut back on executive travel expenses. Hold meetings and conferences in less luxurious hotels and conference centers. Eliminate extravagant dinner banquets. Promote various energy saving practices such as car pools, vegetarian diets, and meatless days. Increase church giving following the 1/3 formula cited in item two. Change curriculum so a greater understanding of the Third World countries is included.

12. Utilize the mass media to raise public consciousness. Write the editor of the local newspaper occasionally. Include the name of the member of Congress when practical. It will have some influence. Contact the local radio station or television network for some time to discuss the hunger problem. This can be done on the level of denominational effort.

13. Participate actively in citizen movements which are working for greater justice in today's society. The Farm Workers movement led by Cesar Chavez, Nader's Raiders on consumer protection, and Bread for the World, a Christian group formed to combat hunger, are movements deserving support. Other groups working effectively are: Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, CROP, and World Vision International. The movements for the upliftment of women, minorities, and the poor merit support. Through these movements and others that might be created, we need pressure groups and lobbying groups to influence our congressional members. Many of our governmental policies need to be changed and formulated to assist the poor and hungry.

As Christians our short-lived responses of charity

are not enough. The enormous problem of hunger can be averted only if we can effect change on a larger scale. Our goal should be to build structures based on egalitarian justice. While the forces of self-interest in economic competition and power in political relations have dominated our practices, we must work for systems of greater social justice. This means that the powerful must help empower the powerless, the rich must share its resources with the poor, and the free must assist in the liberation of the oppressed.

The things that individuals and groups can do are many and varied. It is important that the effort be concentrated and not be attenuated. This requires careful planning and wise selection of projects. I wish to suggest the following long-range goals as a guide for the above activities:

1. To enable people to become more aware of our responsibility to other nations and other peoples in the light of love and social justice.

2. To influence our political leaders to re-evaluate and reset our priorities for world hunger (e.g., reduction of military expenditures, raise the importance of hungry nations).

3. To redefine as well as change our values and norms of our societies for greater distribution of food resources and wider social justice.

4. To liberate persons in both developed and developing nations from oppressive practices and structures--colonial legacy, multi-national corporations, unequal trade practices.

In Christ there is a new vision, a new hope, and a new creation. The question is, will churches on this planet have this new world come about in spite of them or will it

come about because of them? There are dark forces operating in the world and goodness of God and the love of Christ are the counter forces. The coming of Christ has already set in motion the redemption of this world. The real challenge for us is to rally around Jesus Christ, identifying with the agony of the defeated, sharing with the homeless and the hungry our abundance, and lifting our hearts with love to the glory of God's Kingdom. Where the Third World people hurt, we also hurt. Where they have anguish, we also have anguish. And where they have hope, we also have hope. We may sum up all this in the following manner: "This understanding of the churches within a world shaped by human hunger and poverty grows out of the biblical rhythm of death and resurrection."¹⁹

¹⁹M. Darrol Bryant, A World Broken by Unshared Bread (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970), p. 73.

RECAPITULATION

The ethical life for Christians is established on one fundamental principle--Christian agape. The love of God and the love of neighbor describe the essence of the Christian message. The message comes to us in the form of human life and deeds, God incarnate in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation takes place for the redemption of God's people--people who have gone astray, who have become blind to the route back home, who are bound by a life of sin, and who have created for themselves a corrupted world. God's love so fully manifested in the Incarnation is the source from which goodness and good-will spring. It is the hope of the world. It is the norm for all human response. It points to justice and social responsibility so that all the humanly created structures and systems might serve the well-being of all people. Justice gives love its form as a skeleton frames the body. Both the needy and the oppressed are served by justice. Responsibility tied to love reaches all neighbors. Because love instills in us our sense of social responsibility, our ethical life becomes one of active response opposed to indifferent passivity.

Hunger is one of the most urgent of human dilemmas affecting the lives of millions. The state of hunger is degrading, destructive, and hopeless. Life on earth is a network of human exchange, ecological interdependence,

action and response. Thus no man or woman is an island. The causes which have led to such a dehumanizing predicament, to a large degree, have been set in activity by our distant past and now aided by human selfishness, ignorance, carelessness and indifference. The population growth is unprecedented in human history and it finds itself in a collision course with the shortage of food. The colonial system, the foreign assistance program, and the high consumption patterns are taking their toll dramatically. Their consequential damage has been complicated by ecological factors which are yet to be understood fully by modern science and technology. It seems that the earth has almost reached, if it has not yet, its carrying capacity, and the call for a limit to growth is now done in earnest.

The need for human response is now a moral issue, it comes down to hungry people's right to food. The lifeboat ethic and triage concept have their advocates, but fall short of responsible action. The ethic of love views people in hunger belts and poverty as children of God whose lives deserve justice and liberation. Agape is our basis for planning and acting.

What is necessary to resolve this most complex problem is an integrated approach. One of the key emphases is development--human and societal. Many changes are necessary--foreign policies, trade preferences, human attitude, and life-styles--before any let-up can be perceived. The insecurities of the poor can be profoundly relieved by food

aid, more stable prices, international cooperation on grain reserves, absorption of the unemployed by agricultural development, in essence, an overall improvement of living standards.

Domestically Americans have the responsibility to make manifold alternations in life-styles, in attitudes, and in actions. A basic grass roots movement needs to be effected along with an increase involvement in the political arena. Churches can and ought to play a more exemplary role in our struggle to eliminate the plight of global hunger.

While this study has been an attempt to cover what I consider the major aspects of the hunger phenomenon, it has in no way dealt with all the issues involved. Nevertheless, what I have tried to present has been a Christian perspective. Ultimately, human response has as its primary motivation Christian agape. If we totally love our Lord God and if we have complete dedication to help our neighbor, love will not permit any of us to be uninvolved bystanders. Our Christian heritage gives us the impetus to be fully involved, always caring, and constantly striving for the salvation of all individuals. It is my opinion that the forces operating in the world have already made their headway into the problem and they will be difficult to divert. On that thought I foresee the continuation of human suffering and ecological setbacks. Mini-catastrophes are inevitable. However, this does not mean that global hunger is without

solution. We have the human resources, we have untapped human potentiality, and we have sufficient technology to tip the scale. We lack the will to respond. Whether we do or not, this is a question yet to be answered. It is my hope that we will and that we will with great impact before it is too late.

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